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THE
CHRISTIAN PATTERN,
OR THE
IMITATION
OF
JESUS CHRIST,
BEING AN
ABRIDGEMENT
OF THE
WORKS
OF
THOMAS à KEMPIS.

By a FEMALE HAND.

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OF THE

IMITATION

OF

JESUS CHRIST.

The First Book

CHAP. I.

Of the Contempt of the Vanities of the World.

H*E that followeth me, shall not walk in Darkneſs, but ſhall have the* John VIII. 12.
Light of Life, ſays that Chriſt who declares himſelf *The Light of the World.* The true Importance and Deſign of which Words is doubtleſs to inſtruct us, that the Way to be truly Enlighten- ed, and to deliver ourſelves from a Blindneſs of Heart, is to make his Holy Liſe the Object of our Imitation, and to form our Diſpoſitions and Actions upon the perfect Model of that bright Example. But how ſhall we follow a Pattern, which we but little think of? The firſt Step therefore towards thus Copying after him, is the employing our Thoughts, with great Fre- quency and ſerious Attention, upon the Perfections of this Divine Original.

2. The Doctrine taught by Christ, excels all the Instructions deliver'd to Mankind, by all the Holy Men that ever lived. And every Man, endued with a true Christian Spirit, will not fail there to find a hidden Manna, like that of old, fitted both to nourish, and minister Delight to his Soul. The true Account then why Men hear the Gospel without any sensible Relish, or eager Desire, is, that they are not endued with the Spirit of Christ. This is a Treasure found of them only who desire to find it; and a Man must resolve and endeavour to form his whole Conversation upon the Principles of that Doctrine, before he can attain to a full Understanding of its Excellence, and feel an inward Satisfaction in the Study of it.

3. And here indeed lies the true Benefit of Meditation and Knowledge. For, without this, how poor and unprofitable a Thing is Speculation? What is a Man the better, for entering into the sublime Mysteries of the Trinity, and being able to dispute nicely upon that adorable Union; if in the meanwhile he want that Meekness and Humility, without which he must needs lie under the Displeasure of the Trinity? Certain it is, that Distinctions and Notions, tho' never so subtle or serviceable to the Truth, do not make a Man Just and Holy: But a careful and conscientious Life recommends us to the Favour and Love of God. I had rather be affected with a true penitent Sorrow for Sin, than be able to resolve the most difficult Cases about it. Suppose you had all the Bible faithfully treasured up in your Memory, and a perfect Comprehension of all the Moral Philosophy in the World; To what purpose serves this mighty Stock of Rules, if not drawn out into Use by Charity, and seconded by Divine Grace? *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*, said the *Eccles. i. 2.* Preacher; and his Observation admits of that single Exception, taken notice of in the Conclusion of his Book, *Love God, and keep his Commandments;* for

for this is the whole of Man. He, who would approve himself wise in good earnest, must first, by a just Contempt of this World, raise himself up to the Desires and Endeavours after the Kingdom of Heaven. Chap. xii, 13

4. Vanity most certainly it is, with great Solitude to seek, and place our Hope and Confidence in Riches, which are sure to perish. Vanity, to cherish our Ambition, and strive, by all possible Means, to attain a high and honourable Station. Vanity, to indulge the Desires of the Flesh, and court those Pleasures, which draw after them grievous and lasting Pains. Vanity most exquisite, to be infinitely concerned for living long, and perfectly indifferent, or but coldly affected, concerning living well. Vanity most fatal and stupid, to determine our Thoughts and Cares to this Life present, and never look forward to that which is to come : To doat upon Things that fly swiftly from us, and cling fast about imaginary and transitory Delights ; while we suffer our selves by these to be detained and diverted from the Pursuit of substantial and eternal Joys.

5. Oh turn this Vehemence of Desire upon the right Object, and remember, to how little purpose it is placed on that which cannot give Content ; since most true is that Observation, which ought to make us wiser, *The Eye is not satisfied with Seeing, nor the Ear filled with Hearing.* Use Eccles. i. 8. then thy utmost Diligence, to wean thy Soul from the Love of the Things that are seen, and set thy Affections on Things that are not seen. For, be assured, that they, who follow their own sensual Appetites, to lose, not only their Labour and Expectation, but also their Innocence and Purity, the Peace of their own Conscience, and the Favour of Almighty God.

C H A P. II.

Modesty.

THE Desire of Knowledge is natural to every Man, but what Advantage is it to be knowing, if that Knowledge be not seasoned with Virtue and Religion ? The vilest Peasant, and he, whom we in scorn think least removed from a Brute, if he serve God according to the best of his mean Capacity, is yet a better and more valuable Man, than the proudest Philosopher, who busies himself in considering the Motions of the Heavens, but bestows no Reflection at all upon those of his own Mind. The certain Consequence of knowing a Man's self truly, is a mean Opinion of himself, and not being exalted with the Commendations of other People. And supposing my Knowledge so vast and Extensive, that nothing this World contains were hid from it ; yet what would all this avail me in the Sight of God, who, when he comes to Judgment will try me upon the Issue, not of what I have known, but what I have done ?

2. Restrain that extreme Desire of increasing Learning, which at the same Time does but increase Sorrow, by involving the Mind in much Perplexity and false Delusion. For such are fond of being thought Men of Wisdom, and respected as such : And yet this boasted Learning of theirs consists in many Things, which a Man's Mind is very little, if at all, the better for the Knowledge of. And sure, whatever they may think of the Matter, he who bestows his Time and Pains upon Things, that are of no Service for promoting the Happiness of his Soul, ought by no means to be esteemed a wise Man. Words and Notions give no inward Satisfaction ; but a Virtuous Life never fails to comfort and refresh the Mind, and to minister the best Antidote

against all manner of Difficulties ; for such 1 Joh. iii. 21.
 is a good Conscience, and a well ground-
 ed *Confidence towards God*, which is its inseparable At-
 tendant.

3. The more a Man knows, and the better those Subjects are, upon which his Studies have been employed ; the heavier shall his Account be, unless his Piety and Virtue be proportionably eminent and exemplary. So little Reason have we to be exalted with our Attainments ; and not rather to fear more, as we improve more in Knowledge. And what Improvements indeed can possibly be so great, as to justify our being proud of them ? For no Man can ever want this Mortification of his Vanity, That what he knows is but a very little, in comparison of what he still continues ignorant of. Consider this, and, instead of boasting of thy Knowledge of a few Things, confess and be out of Countenance for the many more which thou dost not understand. And why so forward to prefer thyself before others, when there are so many Persons whose Learning, and Skill in the Rules of living, give them an undoubted Right to be preferr'd before you ? If you would attain to useful Learning indeed, learn to conceal your Attainments, and be content that the World should think meanly of you. For Lowliness of Mind, and not thinking of a Man's self *more highly than he ought to think*, is the most difficult, but withal the most profitable Lesson ; and the preferring others before ourselves, is a Point of true Wisdom and high Perfection. Nor ought our Opinions of this Kind to be changed, though we should see another guilty of some egregious Folly, or very grievous Wickedness ; since we our selves are Men of like Passions and Frailties ; nor can we tell how long our own Virtue may continue unshaken. Remember then, that Infirmities are common to all Mankind ; and so remember it, as to persuade yourself, or at least to suspect, that these are

dealt to Thee in as plentiful a Measure, as to any other Person whatsoever.

CH A P. III.

The Doctrine of Truth,

Blessed is the Man, whom Truth condescends to Teach; not by dark Figures, and Words quickly forgotten, but by a full and familiar Communication of itself. Happy should we be, could we but see Things as they are, free from the Errors of our fond Opinions, and the false Estimates we form from thence. How high a Value do we set upon the Knack of Distinguishing and Disputing nicely, in Matters hid from common Apprehensions; but Matters too, which to know nothing of will not render a Man's Case one whit the worse at the Day of Judgment? Egregious and Elaborate Folly! which overlooks useful and necessary Points, as Things not worthy our Regard; and bends our Industry to find out those, which either turn to no Account, or what is worse then none. Thus taking Pains to be ignorant at last, and verifying in our own selves, the Prophet's Description of the Heathen Idols, which *have Eyes*, and yet *see not*.

Why should we then, with such eager Toil, strive to be Masters of Logical Definitions? Or what do our abstracted Speculations profit us? He, whom the Divine Word instructs, takes a much shorter Cut to Truth: For from this Word alone all saving Knowledge is derived, and without this no Man understands or judges aright. But he, who reduces all his Studies to, and governs himself by this Rule, may establish his Mind in perfect Peace, and rest himself securely upon God, O thou whose very Essence is

Truth

Truth, unite me to thyself in perfect Love ! The Variety of other Subjects tires and distracts my Soul ; in Thee alone I find the Sum of all my Wishes and Desires. Should all our Teachers be forever dumb, and this great Volume of the Creatures continue shut to us, we might dispense with all the rest ; if Thou would'st vouchsafe thy own Information, and teach us by thy Self,

The better acquainted any Man is with himself, the more he converses with, and retires into his own Breast ; and the less he wanders abroad, and dwells upon things without him, the more extensive and sublime is his Knowledge, and the more easily attained. Because this Man receives, and is directed by, a Ray darted from Heaven into his Soul. A Mind sincere, and pure, and firm, is not diverted by Multiplicity of Objects. For the Honour of God is its constant Aim ; and, having but one End to pursue, it is in perfect Peace and Unity with itself, and does not divide its Thoughts in Vanity and Self-love. For what can be a greater Hindrance, then our own ambitious and ungovern'd Passion ? A truly good and pious Man first orders and disposes all his Business regularly, before he enters upon the Execution of any Design : He suffers no vicious Inclination to divert him, but makes every Undertaking submit to the Dictates of Reason and Religion. The sharpest as well as noblest Conflict is that, wherein we labour to gain a Conquest over our selves ; and this should be our principal and constant Care, to get ground every Day, by bringing our Passions more and more under, and becoming more masterly Proficients in Virtue and Goodness.

Nor may we suppose any Degree of Virtue so exalted, that it should cease to be a State of Proficiency ; for such is the Condition of Mortals, that their utmost possible Perfection in this Life, is ever embased with an Allay of Imperfection ; and their brightest Noti-

ons are clouded with some Confusion and Obscurity. But in the Study of ourselves we are best capable of avoiding Mistakes. Therefore a true Sense of what we are, and that Humility, which cannot but proceed from such a Sense, is a surer Way of bringing us to God, than the most laborious and profound Enquiries after Knowledge. Not that Learning is in its own Nature blameable ; for the Understanding of any thing whatsoever, considered simply, and as it really is, ought to be acknowledged commendable and good ; the Gift and Ordinance of God. But the Danger is, when we give this the Precedence in our Esteem, before things abundantly better : I mean a good Conscience, and a virtuous Conversation. The true Reason then why, in an Age where Learning is had in universal Admiration, so little Profit is made ; and both Error and Vice do, notwithstanding, so wretchedly abound ; is, in Truth, no other, than that Men generally mistake their main Business and proper Excellence. They had rather cultivate their Parts than their Manners, and account it a greater Accomplishment, to know much, than to Live well.

Oh ! would Men but bestow half the Pains in rooting out Vice and planting Virtue in its stead, which they are content to throw away upon captious and unprofitable Questions, and the *Opposition of Science*, falsely so called ; what a blessed Reformation should we see ? Then would not the Vulgar, and Meaner Sort, abandon themselves to such scandalous, brutish, and abominable Wickedness. Nor would the Men of Sense and Learning, and Quality, continue so profligate and dissolute in their Manners, and blemish, as they do, their Honour and Attainments, with shameless and licentious Impurities. Surely this could not be, did Men but consider at all, that a Day of Judgment there will come, wherein Measures will be taken very different from ours ; when
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the Enquiry, upon which our Affairs must all turn, will be, not how much we have Heard or Read, but how much we have Done ; not how Eloquent our Expressions, but how Pure and Devout our Lives ; how much our Manners, not our Capacity or Breeding, our Wit or Rhetorick, distinguished us from common Men. But, if the Credit and Honour of the thing were the only Consideration ; yet even thus, Where is the Fruit of all this mighty Toil ? What is become of all the Eminent Divines, Philosophers, Lawyers, Orators, Persons celebrated far and near just at the Time when they lived and flourished ? but now somebody else enjoys the Gains of all that Learning and Fatigue ; and 'tis odds, whether he that lives upon their Labours, ever so much as sends one Thought after them. These Men, so eminent in their respective Professions, no doubt, thought themselves considerable in their own Time ; but now that Time is gone, and they are lost in universal Silence. Their very Names are buried as deep as their Bodies ; and the one was scarce sooner out of Sight, then the other out of all Mention and Remembrance.

Ah wretched Men ! How have you been deluded ? How short and withering a Good does that Fame and Reputation prove, which you vainly promised your selves would be eternal ; always fresh and flourishing, always, precious in the Mouths and Memories of Posterity ; But this, and no better, is the Condition of all worldly Honour. Oh ! had you but been equally careful to improve in Piety, and rendered your Virtues as eminent as your Learning, your Studies then had not been fruitless ; but followed with a Recompence, which would not thus have forsaken you. But this is the fatal Error of our Age, that infinite Numbers are destroyed by unprofitable Knowledge. They lay them selves out upon Subtilties and Curiosities, which turn to no Account ; and the only Thing which can
make

make them amends at last, Religion and the Service of God, that they give themselves no manner of Trouble about, but slight, as not worth their Care or Thought. The great Occasion of the fantastical Opinions and dangerous Corruptions, with which the World is pester'd, is certainly this, that Men propose no End of their Studies but to be great, and to have other People think as highly of them as they do of themselves. And, because of all things, they detest Humility, and a Submission to Truth; God gives them the due Reward of their Vanity, and suffers them to be seduced by their own Absurdities and

Rom. i. 21.

Imaginations. If then we would be Great,

let us take the proper Course for it: For none is truly so, but he that abounds in the Love of God, and in Good Works: None is truly so, but he, who thinks modestly of himself, and is got above the Temptations of Ambition and Vain-glory. The Man, who is wise to purpose, counts all that this World can boast of,

Phil. iii. 8. but *Dross and Dung*, that he may win

Christ. And he is an expert and learned

Man indeed, who hath learnt to give the Preference to God's Will, before his own; who resolutely complies with His Commands, and as resolutely denies his own Inclinations.

C H A P. IV.

Prudence in our Behaviour.

BE not too hasty in believing every Word, nor the Suggestions of every Spirit; but consider coolly and leisurely, and make a Conscience of giving your Credit with due Caution. Men are much more prone (the greater is the Pity) both to speak and believe Ill, than Well, of their

Prov. xiv. 15.

1 Joh. iv. 1.

their Neighbours. This is our Infirmary and Unhappiness: But a good Man will consider and make Allowances for it. And the Effect of this Consideration will be, the suspending his Assent, and neither believing all he hears, nor officiously reporting all he believes, *Eccles xix. 5.*

It is an Argument of great Wisdom, to do nothing rashly ; nor to be obstinate and inflexible in our Opinions, And the Cautionness I just now recommended, in crediting and spreading Reports, is a necessary Branch of the same Perfection. Advise in your Affairs with wise and good Men ; and think it more for your Reputation, to be instructed by those who understand better, than to act upon your own Head. A Virtuous Life makes a Man prudent in God's Esteem, and gives true Conduct and Experience. The more humble and observant we are to His Directions, the better we shall behave our selves, and the greater Satisfaction and Peace of Mind we shall find resulting from all we do. *Eccl. xix. 24.*

C H A P. V.

Of Reading the Holy Scriptures.

THE End we should propose to ourselves in this Study, is the discerning and discovery of Truth, not the observing Quaintness and Propriety of Expression. That Book of God indeed should be perused with the same Spirit and Temper by which it was dictated. And as the Holy Ghost intended the Profit of

Mankind more than Niceness of Words
Rom. xv. 4. and Phrases, so should we aim at growing better Livers, rather than wiser, or more accurate Speakers, by what he hath delivered. To Persons thus disposed, the plainest and most pious
1 Cor. ii. 1. 4. Parts

Parts of Scripture will minister a Delight equal to those which are more mysterious and sublime. The Authority and Skill of the Penman should be of little weight with us. Nor Matters it, whether he were one of great or mean Attainments ; for the Love and Desire of Truth is the proper Motive to Study ; and the Substance of what is spoken, not the Person who speaks, ought principally to be considered. *1 Pet. i. 24. 25.* *All Flesh is Grass, but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever ;* and this Word speaks to us in different Manners, without any partial Respect of Persons.

One great Inconvenience in Reading the Scriptures, is our own vain Curiosity. We lose much of the Benefit which might otherwise be gathered from them, by pretending to nice Disquisitions of difficult Points, and labouring to bring to the Standard of our own imperfect Reason, what we should be content to receive with the Simplicity of an humble Obedience, and place to the Account of divine Faith. If you would Read them, and profit by that Reading ; you must do it with a submissive and humble, a sincere and teachable Disposition of Mind ; and account it a greater Excellence to believe what God hath said, than to affect the Reputation of Learning, by Singularity of Opinions, and a bold Attempt to bring down all he says to your own Comprehension. If in some things you find Occasion to doubt or distrust your own Judgment, consult wise and holy Persons, and submit Patiently to hear and be inform'd by them. *Eccles. viii. 8. 9.* Nor let a vain Conceit of your own Abilities produce Contempt of the Aphorisms and Parables of the Ancients. For, be well assured, they were not uttered at all Adventures ; but they, who delivered these proverbial Sentences, knew them to be the Result of long and judicious Observation,

C H A P. VI.

Of Inordinate Affections.

THE Moment a Man cherishes any immoderate Desire, he feels a Tempest rising in his Soul. Pride and Covetousness never suffer us to rest; but the Poor and Lowly in Heart, the Humble and the contented, enjoy themselves in a profound and perpetual Calm. He that is still in Conflict with his Passion, and hath not yet attained a compleat Victory over them, is easily tempted, and often finds himself overborn by things not worth his Concern. For the Remains of a carnal Spirit, and the strong Tendencies to Pleasures of Sense, will not suffer a Man, without great Difficulty, to draw his Mind off from worldly Affections. And therefore, while he is endeavouring to do this, he endeavours it with sore Travail and Pain; commits a Violence upon himself, and is provoked to Anger and Indignation against all that opposes him in so laborious an Undertaking.

But if he indulge those Desires, and succeed in them; the Consequence is worse this way, than the other. For then he is stung with Remorse for his guilty Compliance, and discontented to find, that the Gratifying his Inclination does not yield the Satisfaction he promised himself from it. This convinces him by sad Experience, that true Peace and Content is never to be had by obeying his Appetites, but by an obstinate Resistance of them. And such Peace cannot be expected in the Breast of any Sensual Man; for it is the peculiar Portion and Happiness of a Soul raised above the World, a zealous and devout, a mortified and refined, and heavenly Disposition of Spirit.

C H A P. VII.

Directions for avoiding Pride, and vain Confidences.

TO put our Trust in Man, or in any other Creature, is most egregious Vanity. Think it not below you, to submit to the meanest good *Jer. xvii, 5.* Offices for the Service of your Brethren, and the sake of Jesus Christ; nor count it any Shame to be thought Poor and Mean in this World. Do your own Endeavour honestly, and faithfully; and never doubt of God's Assistance. Depend not upon your own Wisdom, and place not any Confidence in the greatest Man living; but let your whole *1 Pet. iv. 5.* Trust rest entirely upon the Favour of *Luc. i. 52,* God, who bringeth down and *resisteth* *xiv. 11.* *the Proud, but giveth Grace to the Humble, and exalteth those who are content to abase themselves.*

Boast not of Riches, because they are in your present Possession; nor of Friends, because they have Power and Interest; but if you will glory, glory in God, who is able to give all Things, and willing to give that which is better than all, even Himself. And why should the Strength and Beauty of your Person puff you up with Pride, when it is in the Power of a very little Sickness, to bring upon you extreme Weakness and odious Deformity? If you be inclined to value your Wit and Address above due measure, remember from what Hand these come, and do not provoke the Giver, by abusing the Gift.

Fancy not your self better than your Neighbours, for fear that God, who knows what is in every Man, think the worse of you upon that Account. Nay, value not your self even for what you have done well, for God judgeth not as Man judgeth; and what we often
are

are highly satisfied with, he sometimes thinks not fit so much as to approve. If you be conscious of any thing good in your self, think that the same or better Qualities may likewise be found in others : For while you allow Their Excellencies, it will be no difficult matter to preserve a modest Opinion of your own. There can come no harm of supposing every other Man better then your self ; but the supposing any Man worse than your self, may be attended with very ill Consequences. *The Meek,* says the Scripture, *is refreshed in the Multitude of* Psal. xxxvii. *Peace ; but the Proud in Spirit is like a* Isa. lvii. *troubled Sea,* perpetually tost and driven by the fierce Commotions of Anger, and Emulation and Envy, and Disdain, which never suffer him to be easy and composed.

C H A P. VIII.

Against too general an Acquaintance, and inconvenient Freedoms in Conversation.

Open not thine Heart to every Man, but make choice of prudent and religious Persons to disclose thy Affairs to. Frequent not the *Eccl. viii. 19.* Company of young Men and Strangers ; Flatter not the Rich, neither effect to be seen in the Presence of great Men : But associate theyself with the Devout, the Virtuous, the Humble ; and contrive that thy Discourse be profitable. Desire not the intimate Acquaintance of Women ; but, instead of thy Conversation, let them have thy Prayers ; and recommend the Preservation and the Reward of their Virtue to God. Converse as much as may be with God, with his holy Angels, with thy own Conscience ; and complain not for want of Company, nor think it an Unhappiness to

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have

have but few Acquaintance, when thou hast so good Company as this always at hand.

Our Charity indeed should be universal, and extend to all Mankind ; but it is by no means convenient, our Friendships and Familiarities should do so too. We often find, that a Person altogether unknown to us, comes recommended by a good Character, which makes us passionately fond of his Acquaintance ; and yet this very Man, when better known, loses the great Opinion we conceived of him before, and grows palled and flat upon our Hands. And this we may be sure is no less likely to prove our own Case ; For the Persons, with whom we hope to ingratiate ourselves by a freer Acquaintance, frequently discover some ill quality in us, which makes us less acceptable. And therefore, in Prudence and tenderness to ourselves and others both, we should be sparing in our Intimacies ; because it so very often happens, that the more perfectly Men are understood, the less they are esteemed.

C H A P. IX.

Obedience and a State of Subjection.

IT is a very valuable Advantage to live under the Direction of a Superior ; and whatever the Generality of Men think of the Matter, more difficult and hazardous to Command than to Obey. Many submit more out of Necessity, than out of any Principle of Duty or Choice ; and, to such as these, this is a State of continual Torment. All they do is against the Grain, attended with constant Murmurings and Complaints ; the Life of Slaves and Brutes, and not of Men, who should act with a Spirit of Freedom. And this Native Liberty no Inferior attains to, till he have

have learnt to obey heartily, for God's, and Conscience sake. Whatever Post you form an Idea of, none will give you Quiet and Inward Content, equal with that of a State of Subjection : Many have fed themselves with fond Imaginations, how happy they should be, if they could change their Condition for a higher ; but few, if any, who have actually made the Experiment, have found themselves at all the happier or easier for it. .

'Tis true indeed, every Man's own Judgment is the proper Rule and Measure of his Actions ; and hence it comes to pass, that we are all best affected to them who are of the same Opinions with ourselves. But 'tis as true, that if God rule in our Hearts, we shall not think much to recede from our own Sense in some Cases, when Peace and the Publick Good may be promoted by such Concessions. For who is so absolutely and compleatly Wise, that nothing escapes his Knowledge ? If then our Knowledge be but partial and imperfect, 'tis but reasonable we should not abound too much in our own Sense, but allow a fair Hearing at least to those who differ from us. And in such Cases a Man gains a great Point, when he knows himself in the right, and yet in Tenderneſs and Charity, can comply with the Infirmities or Mistakes of others, rather then offend God, by being too tenacious of his own better Judgment.

I have frequently been told, That it is much safer to take Advice, than to give it. For a Man may have considered and determined well ; and yet there may be some Cases, which may make it reasonable to depart from that determination, and give ourselves up to be determined by other Persons. And when these Cases happen, To refuse such Compliances, manifestly betrays our own Self-Conceit, and is not Constancy but Obstinacy of Spirit.

C H A P. X.

Few Words are best.

DEcline Crowds and Company as much as conveniently you may. For frequent Discourse, even of News or indifferent Things, which happens upon such Occasions, is sometimes an Obstruction to Virtue, when least intended or suspected so to be. The World and its Vanities easily take hold of us, and our Minds are ensnared and captivated, before we are aware. How often have I found Reason to wish, that I had not been in Company, or that I had said nothing, when I was there? If we examine, how it comes to pass, that Mutual Conversation gives so great Delight, notwithstanding we so seldom enjoy that Pleasure with perfect Innocence; the true Account, I think is this, That we find our selves diverted by Discourse, and unbend our Thoughts from severer Studies: That what we desire and are most fond of, or what we have the greatest Aversion to, lies uppermost in our Minds; and therefore we propose some Ease in discharging our selves upon these Subjects.

But how very seldom do we find that Ease we propose by doing so? For this outward Consolation mightily takes off from that inward and spiritual Satisfaction, in which true Happiness consists. Therefore it is our Duty to Watch and Pray, and to fill up the empty Spaces of Life, with these holy and retired Exercises. And if at any time the Refreshments of Company be chosen, and convenient; a strict Guard should be set upon our Tongues, that they utter nothing amiss; but improve these very Diversions to the Edification of our selves, and them that hear us. Impertinent and lavish Talking is in it self a very vicious Habit, and a wretched Hindrance to our Spiritual proficiency. And these two Considerations ought to
make

make us extremely cautious in our Conversation. But it is the Privilege of Virtuous and Religious Discourse that Piety and Goodness are wonderfully promoted by such Conferences. And then especially, when Persons of the like Heavenly Spirit and Temper frequent one another's Company, with a Design of improving by it.

CHAP. XI.

Of Peace of Mind, and a Desire of Improvement.

MEN might live quiet and easy enough, if they would be careful not to give themselves Trouble, and forbear meddling with what other People do and say, in which they are no way concerned. But how should he be easy, who makes other Men's Cares his own? Who industriously seeks Disquiet, and when he might rest in Peace within Doors, goes abroad to invite and fetch Disturbance home to his House; who takes such Pains, and spends so much Time to enquire into the Affairs of Neighbours and Strangers altogether foreign to him; and seldom or never descends into his own Breast, that he may examine and understand himself. *Blessed are the Meek, says the Scripture, for they shall inherit the Earth* *Matb. v. 5.* *peaceably, and increase their Joy in the Lord.* *Isa. xxix. 19.*

Whence is it, think you, that some holy Persons can so perfectly abstract themselves from the Concerns of this World, and find such Satisfaction in their divine Retirements and solitary Contemplations? From hence, no doubt; that they have made it their Business to mortify all earthly and sensual Affections, and so have devoted themselves entirely to God, and are at Liberty to attend upon Him without Distraction. But we find the Case much otherwise with us, because our Passions interrupt our Piety, and the transitory

Things of this World continue tenderly to affect us. We seldom gain an entire Conquest over any one ill Habit ; nor are we zealous to make every Day we live a Step to higher Degrees of Virtue. This is the Reason why we are so cold and insensible, or at best lukewarm and indifferent, in the Exercises of Piety and private Meditation.

Were we but, as we ought to be, dead to the World and our own Lusts, disentangled from those Chains and Snares within that hamper and keep our Souls down to Matter and Sense ; then should we also relish Acts of Devotion, and be ravished with marvellous Joy, when our Thoughts are fixed on God and Heaven. The only, or the greatest Bar to these Spiritual Delights, proceeds from Passions unsubdued ; and from our own Sloth, which cares not to encounter Difficulties, nor aspires to the Perfection of the Saints. Hence is that Tameness and Dejection of Spirit, so visible, so scandalous, when any little Misfortune comes across us : Hence our vain Confidence, and anxious Care, which seeks and depends upon human Helps, and Remedies ; and neglects God our only sufficient Refuge and Deliverer.

Would we but quit our selves like Men, and resolutely stand our Ground, we should not fail of Succours from above. God is always ready to strengthen those who strive lawfully, and place their Hope in the Assistance of his heavenly Grace : He means our very Hardships and Dangers for our Good ; and engages us in new Conflicts and Temptations, that he may make our Victories more glorious, and qualify us for a brighter Crown. If we content ourselves with the Observance of the outward Duties only, and suppose this is the utmost Perfection necessary for us ; we bring Religion into a very narrow Compass, and may quickly get to the End of it. But alas ! the main of our Business lies within : The Axe must be laid to the Root of
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the Tree, and our Sensual Appetites quite cut down, before we can attain to true Pleasure in Holiness, and a Peaceful Serenity of Mind.

Would we but impose upon ourselves the Task of mortifying a fresh Lust, and conquering a vicious Habit every Year; even thus in a little time we might attain to some Perfection. But alas ! we often take the direct contrary Course ; and are generally more wary, more devout, more zealous to do well, and to avoid Evil, when we first enter upon a Religious Life, than after we have spent some time in it. The Fervor of our Affection, which ought in Reason to grow every Day stronger and brighter, cools and goes out again ; and we reckon it a great Matter, if our Zeal can be kept up to the same Warmth, which we felt at its first kindling. We are too tender of our Ease, and loth to put ourselves upon the stretch : Whereas, would we but use a little Severity, and submit to some Violence at first, that Trouble would quickly wear off ; and all our Progress in Virtue would prove, not easy and tolerable only, but even a Delight, and wonderful Satisfaction to us.

'Tis hard, I own, to part with our old Friends, and to unlearn Habits to which we have been long accustomed. And harder yet it is, to enter into a formal War with our own Inclinations, and obstinately to deny what we eagerly desire. But if we do not conquer smaller Difficulties, what will become of us when assaulted by greater ? If we do not resist our natural Propensions at first, before Inclination is strengthened by Custom, the Enemy will gather Strength. Every Day's Practice is a fresh reinforcement, and the longer the Delay, the greater will be the Difficulty. O think of this in time, and consider the happy Effects of an early and serious Piety : What Peace, what Triumphs to yourselves ; what Joy to others, to God and Christ, to Angels and good Men, you will certainly procure,

by behaving yourselves gallantly in this Spiritual Warfare. This ture will balance all the Hardships of Virtue; reproach your Cowardice and Sloth, provoke and inflame your Diligence and Courage; and make you zealous, resolute, impatient to grow in Grace, and advance every Day in Spiritual Perfection.

C H A P. XII.

The Advantage of Afflictions.

IT is good for me that I have been in Trouble, says David. Nor is it David's Case alone; for many Men have reason to bless that Providence, which sends Crosses and Calamities upon them. These bring a Man's Thoughts home, put him upon Reflection, and help him to understand himself and his Condition. They shew him, that he is in a State of Exile and Pilgrimage, and forbid him to set up his Hope and Rest in a strange Country, where he is no better than a Sojourner.

Nor is it thus with those Sufferings alone, which the immediate Hand of Heaven inflicts; but even those whereof Men are the Instruments. The Injuries and contumelious Usage, the Calumnies and Censures of them who speak and think Ill of us, bring their Profit with them too, even when most wrongful, most undeserved. For these oftentimes are an occasion of rectifying our Measures, as bringing us to a juster and more modest Opinion of ourselves. They cure our Ambition and Vain-glory, and convince us how vain a thing it is, to thirst after Reputation and the Praise of Men, when even Innocence and Goodness cannot protect us from Slander and Reproaches. They teach us to set a due Value upon the Testimony of our own Consciences, and the righteous Approba-
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tion of God, the Searcher of Hearts ; when That, which he will not fail to commend and reward, cannot escape the Contempt and Condemnation of the World, nor prevail for so much as fair Quarter, from our mistaken and injurious Brethren.

It is therefore both our Duty and our Wisdom, so entirely to place our Happiness and Expectations in God alone ; that we shall not need to be extremely solicitous for many outward Comforts, or feel ourselves destitute, or much dejected, when any of these happen to fail or forsake us. For when a well-disposed Man is oppressed with Sufferings and Temptations, or Perplexed with evil Thoughts, he then feels experimentally, how necessary the divine Assistance is, and how little he is able to do or endure without it : Then he is touched with inward Remorse, then does he groan in secret, and in the Anguish of his Heart, pour out his Requests for Relief and Deliverance : Then even Life itself becomes a Burthen, and Death desirable ; at that which will translate him from this Valley of Tears and Corruption, to a Life of Immortality with his God and Redeemer. In a word, Such Circumstances as these are more effectual than ten thousand Arguments, to convince him, by his own sensible Experience, that perfect Security, and entire Satisfaction are not so much as consistent with the Condition of Man in this present World ; and therefore we must be content to wait another and Future State, which alone deserves our Affections, because it alone can make us truly and compleatly Happy.

C H A P. XIII.

Of Resisting Temptations.

SO long as we continue in this World, we must not flatter ourselves with an Imagination so vain, as that of being exempted from Tribulations and Trials.

Job. vii. 1. These are so inseparable from Mortality, *Sec. lxx. E-* that *Job* calls the Life of Man a *Warfare*, *vulg.* or *Place of Exercise*. It highly concerns

every one of us upon this account, to take great Care for managing himself under his Temptations ; to watch and pray diligently ; as being duly sensible that he hath a watchfull Enemy to deal with, one who will

1 Pet. v. 8. not fail to take all Advantages of deceiving, and who *goes about continually, seeking whom he may devour*. Nor must our Attainments in Virtue dispose us to remit of this Care, for Virtue is no absolute Security. No Man is so perfect, so holy, as never to be assaulted, or out of the reach of this Adversary. We may defend ourselves against his Attacks, but still attack'd we must, and most certainly shall be.

Now tho' there be great Hazard and Uneasiness, yet is there likewise great Profit to be made from Temptations. Particularly, as they contribute to the humbling our Minds, to the purging off our Dross, and the making us wiser by suffering, This is the rough Way to Happiness, which all the Saints of God have travelled before us, and by it at last were safe conducted to their Journey's End : And they who fell off and were discouraged at the Ruggedness of the Passage, are all Reprobates and Cast-aways. No Order or Profession of Men is so sacred, no Place so remote or solitary, but that Temptations and Troubles will find them out and intrude upon them.

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Nor ought it to seem strange, that these should haunt and pursue us close, at all Times and Places; since we ourselves carry about us the very Matter of our Temptations, and can never run away from that in-born Concupiscence, upon which they work, and from whence they take Occasion to destroy us. This is the Account we may reasonably give ourselves, why there should be such an uninterrupted Succession of Temptations and Miseries, and why one Trouble should press so hard upon the Heels of another. For how indeed can it be otherwise; since with our Innocence we lost our Safety and Happiness, and must be born to Trouble, because the Ground of our Trouble is now become a Part of our Nature? Many Men involve themselves deeper in Temptations, by being too solicitous to decline them. For we must not suppose ourselves always to have conquered, a Temptation, when we have fled from it. The nobler, and sometimes the more effectual way, is to vanquish them by patient enduring, and being humbled under them.

Thus much is plain; That by declining a Temptation we have not disarmed it. The Root is standing still, and will soon be sprouting again; and a Man who flees, is so far from getting Ground upon his Adversary, that he rather gives him Encouragement to pursue more vigorously. The way to overcome is by Patience and Long-suffering, which, by God's Assistance, and by degrees, tho' perhaps but slow ones, is more likely to succeed, than Heat, and Vehemence, and any the violentest and most obstinate Efforts of our own Strength. When you find yourself tempted, be sure to ask Advice; and when you see another so, deal with him gently; support him with Compassion, and administer all the Comfort in your Power, as you could not but wish to be treated yourself, were you in his afflicted Circumstances.

The Beginning of all Temptations to Wickedness,
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is the fickleness of our own Mind, and want of Trust in God. An inconstant and irresolute Man is like a Ship without a Pilot, driven to and fro, at the Mercy of every gust of Wind. *Metals are tried in the Fire, and Acceptable Men in the Furnace of Affliction.* We seldom know the true extent of our own Power, till Temptation discover it to us. But Watchfulness, which is always necessary, is chiefly so when the first Assaults are made. For the Enemy is more easily repulsed, if we never suffer him to get within us, but upon the very first Approach draw up our Forces, and fight him without the Gate. 'Twas well advised of the Poet.

Ovid. *Take Physick early; Med'cines come to late*
Principiis obsta, When the Disease is grown inveterate.
fero Medicina

Paratur. And this will be more manifest, if we observe, by what Methods and Degrees Temptations grow upon us. The first Thing that presents itself to the Mind, is a plain single Thought; This straight is improved into a strong Imagination; That again enforced by a sensible Delight; then follow evil Motions; And when these are once stirred, there remains nothing but the Assent of the Will, and then the Work is finished. Now the first steps of this are seldom thought worth our Care; sometimes not taken notice of; so that the Enemy frequently is got close up to us, and even within our Trenches, before we observe him; and we have lost the Day, for want of defending ourselves, while he was in a Condition of being resisted. For the longer we defer the Engagement, the weaker we grow, and the more our Adversary gathers Strength.

The Season of these Trials is various and uncertain. Upon some they are severer presently after their Conversion, upon others towards the latter End of their Days.

Days. Some have them so thick repeated, that their whole Life is one continued Conflict ; and some again have but very few and gentle Trials. All which different Cases are ordered by a Just and wise God, who knows what each Man deserves, and what he is qualified to undergo ; and weighs all Circumstances so justly, that his several Dispensations are constantly subservient to the Salvation and Happiness of his chosen Servants.

Let us not therefore despair, when Temptations beset us ; but excite our Zeal, and pray to God more fervently, that he would be our present Help and Refuge in all our Troubles ; and as St. *Paul* expresses it, *That he would with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.* *Let us humble ourselves under the trying Hand of God, and patiently submit to his good Pleasure in all our Tribulations.* For those who do so *he will exalt in due time, and save them that be of a meek and a contrite Spirit.*

1 Cor. x. 13.
1 Pet. iv.
Psal, xxxiv.

By Temptations and Afflictions a Man is brought (as it were) to the Touch ; by these his Proficiency is measured, and easily discernable. The greater these are the more acceptable the Sufferer is to God, and the brighter Lustre they add to his Virtue. For, to be Religious and Zealous in the Service of God, when no Uneasiness is upon us ; This is no mighty matter. But if we can suffer with Patience and Resignation, and continue steddy in the Love and Service of God, when he afflicts and sends Bitterness into our Souls, this argues a noble Disposition, and promises an extraordinary Perfection. Some Persons have come off with Safety and Honour in very sharp and trying Instances, and yet are worsted in common and trivial ones. And this Case is capable of a very good Improvement ; For thus no doubt God gives Men warn-
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ing, that they should not presume upon their own Strength, but humbly take Sanctuary in Him, in Matters of Difficulty ; Moved by the Experience of that Weakness, and Frailty, which hath yielded to slighter and less violent Temptations.

C H A P. XIV.

Against Rash Judging.

TURN your Eyes inward upon your self ; for you can very hardly exceed in judging your own Actions, nor be too cautious and sparing in censuring those of others. And *Censuring* indeed this deserves to be called in the worst Sense of the Word, rather than *Judging* ; if we consider, not only how unprofitable to any good End, but how liable to infinite Mistakes, and very often how exceeding sinful, all such Judgments are. Whereas the Examining and Judging our own selves is a Work very proper for us ; Such as we are qualified to undertake, and always turns to good Account. We generally determine and give Sentence, just as we stand affected to Persons and Things ; Our own Passions and Private Prepossessions blind our Minds, and either hinder us from discerning the Truth, or from letting it have its due Weight with us. Whereas, if we proceed from no other Principle but the Love of God ; those Matters, which disagree with our own Sense of Things, wou'd be allow'd fairer Consideration, and be less uneasy to us.

But now something foreign to the Case in Hand, either lurking privately in our own Breast, or happening from without, engages and draws our Minds after it. Many People act upon private Respects and personal Interests, even when least sensible that they do so. These Men continue well satisfied, so long as Things agree

agree with their own Inclination ; but are out of all Patience, upon the least Difference and Contradiction. And hence it comes to pass, that good Correspondence is so often broke, and Quarrels commenced between Friends and Neighbours, even Men of Piety and the most Sacred Professions, upon no other Ground, than that they do not think and act alike.

The Reason of this seems to be that mighty Ascendant, which Use and inveterate Habits naturally gain upon us. We can very hardly be persuaded to change a Practice or Opinion, which we have been educated in, and long accustomed to ; or to suppose that other Men see farther into things than ourselves. The Man therefore, who leans more to his own Understanding and Study, than to that Principle of Virtue, which should dispose him to an entire Submission to Christ and his Doctrine, is by no means in a Condition of having his Mind enlightned by God. For God expects that we should be subject to Him without any Reserves, and thinks it fit, that a Religious Love and Obedience should take place of our own Reasonings.

C H A P. XV,

Of Works of Charity,

THIS is a constant and universal Rule, That no Consideration of any Advantage, no Regard of any Person whatsoever, must ever prevail with us to do an Ill Thing. But the Benefit of a Person, who stands in need of our Relief, is oftentimes a sufficient Warrant for leaving a Good Thing undone ; or for changing our Measures, and chusing to do one Good Thing rather than another. For indeed, properly speaking,

speaking, this is not so much an omitting to do well, as a prudent Contrivance to do better. But, let the Thing we do be what it will, it is the Principle upon which we do it, that must recommend it : And, as without Charity, both all we are, and all we do, signify nothing ; so, where this is at the Bottom, every thing we do, how mean soever in itself, is of very valuable Consideration. For God observes by what Springs we are moved ; measures our Desert, by the Disposition of the Heart, and not by the Worth of the Gift, or the Quality of the Action.

The Man then, that loves a great deal, does a great deal ; the Man that does any thing well, in that one thing does a great deal : And He does well, who prefers the Good of others before his own private Pleasure or Profit. That which frequently passes for Charity, is really no better than a selfish and carnal Principle. For how very seldom do Men act upon other Motives, than the gratifying their own Inclinations, the doing their own Will, the Prospect of their own Advantage, the Expectation of Return or Reward ; so consulting the Convenience, not so much of others, as themselves ?

Now true and perfect *Charity seeks not its own Advantage* ; and if God, in his Bounty, be pleased to recompence it, yet this Recompence is not the thing principally in view, but its great Aim and End is the Glory of God. For the same Reason *Charity envieth not* ; because Envy is a Passion

I Cor. xiii.

proceeding from Selfishness and Pride. And therefore the Man, who acts upon a Principle so generous, as neither to seek his own private Interest, nor to take Satisfaction in himself, but places all his Content and Bliss in God alone, is got above Envy, and incapable of so mean a Passion. Charity looks upon God as the Sole Beginning and End of all Good ; the Source, from whence it flows, and the Immense Ocean, in which

which it is swallowed up; the Person from whom all the Saints derive their Righteousness, and in the Fruition of whom the Reward of their Righteousness consists. And therefore the Man possess'd of this Principle, sets no undue Value upon himself or others; He takes no part of the Merit or Honour to himself; He is not profuse in the Commendation of others; but ascribes the whole Glory of every Virtuous Action to Him, whose originally and in truth it is. Little need be said, to shew, that one thus disposed, thus persuaded of God, as the Only, the Universal Good, must have set his Heart upon things above. For sure the least Spark of his Holy Fire will serve to kindle in our Breasts the Love of Heaven and Spiritual Joys; and suffice to convince us that all here below is full of Vanity, and by no means an Object worthy our Affections.

CHAP. XVI.

Of Bearing with other Mens Faults.

WHEN you observe in yourself or others any thing amiss, which you would fain, but cannot cure, your Duty in such Cases is to endure it, till God sees fit to order Matters otherwise. And a Duty that is highly reasonable, if you consider, that possibly it is much wiser and better, that these Faults should not be amended, than that they should. It may be, God permits them for the Trial and Increase of your Patience and Humility, without which all our Virtues are of no great regard in his Sight. But at the same time that you ought to bear, you are no less obliged to pray against them; to beg that the ill Example of them may be no hindrance to you in your

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Christian Course; and to implore the Assistance of his Grace, for the bearing them in such a manner, that the Provocations arising thence may never shake your Temper, or betray you to any sinful, or so much as indecent, excess of Passion.

If a Man refuse to comply with good Advice, or to reform upon Admonitions and Reproofs; you are not, after these Offers of doing him Service have been made and repeated, obliged to contend with him any longer. 'Tis better to commit the whole Affair to God, and endeavour to effect that by your Prayers, which your Discourses could not do. Beseech Him therefore, whose Infinite Wisdom knows how to bring Good out of Evil, that his Will may be done, and his Name glorified; and that all who Serve and Worship him, may be led into such Actions, as most contribute to these Ends, and are well pleasing in his Sight, and when you have thus discharged Your Part, set yourself resolutely to bear the greatest Infirmities and Faults of your Brethren without any Disturbance. And, for confirming this Resolution, remember, that You also have many Failings of your own, by which the Patience of other People will have its turn of being exercised. And if you do (as certainly you cannot but) see this; think how unreasonable it is, to expect you should make others in all Particulars, what you would have Them to be; when you cannot so much as make yourself what you are sensible you ought to be. And, indeed, nothing is more common, than to express exceeding Zeal in amending our Neighbours, and mighty Indignation against their Vices or Imperfections; while at the same time we neglect the beginning at Home, and either quite overlook, or seem highly contented with our own.

We take a Pleasure in being severe upon others, but cannot endure to hear of our own Faults. We are surprized and uneasy at the Liberties they take with us, and

and wonder with what Confidence they can pretend such Interest in us; and yet there is nothing so extravagant, which we do not think we have a Right to expect, and resent it highly to be denied. We set up for Reformers, declaim at the Wickedness of the Age, and are all for suppressing and punishing it by rigorous Laws; and yet are unwilling, that any Check or Restraint should be put upon our own Freedoms. This shews, how far we are from observing that great Rule of Equity, the Loving our Neighbour as ourselves; and from meting to Others the same measure, which we are content should be measur'd to Us again.

Further yet, Supposing all Men to be without Faults, some Excellencies and Virtues must be lost too: What would become of Patience; what of Forgiving and Forbearing one another for Christ's sake, if there were no Provocations to try our Temper? And such there could not be, if every Man were perfect, and did his Duty. But, as the present Condition of the World is ordered, God hath furnished us with constant Occasions of bearing one another's Burthens. For there is no Man lives without his Failings; No Man that is so happy as never to give Offence; no Man without his Load of Trouble; no Man so sufficient, as never to need Assistance; none so wise, but the Advice of others may at some time or other, be useful and necessary for him: And therefore we should think ourselves under the strongest Engagements to comfort, and relieve, and instruct, and admonish, and bear with one another. Besides, we shall do well to reflect, that Afflictions and uneasy Accidents are the clearest Indication of a Man's Goodness, and the Degrees of his Improvement. For we mistake extremely, in imagining, that any thing which happens to us from without, is the real Cause of our doing well or ill: Adversity does not make Virtue or Vice, but exert and draw them into Practice; it does not change the Man from what he was, but only discover what he really is.

C H A P. XVII.

A Recluse Life.

THE Man who desires to maintain Peace and a good Understanding with others, must learn, in order to it, in many Cases to deny and subdue himself. If then you would keep your Ground, or advance forward in Piety and Virtue, possess yourself entirely with the Notion of your being no better than a Stranger and Pilgrim only here upon Earth. As such, be content to forego the Enjoyments and Esteem of the World, and to be accounted a Fool for Christ's sake. For till this be done, You are not duly prepared to retire, and enter into a Course of Life wholly devoted to God and Religion.

The peculiar Habit, and Tonsure, and other Formalities, by which Monasticks are distinguish'd from common Men, add nothing to their Sanctity, nor contribute in the least to render them what they pretend to be. This can only be done by a Temper, as different from the rest of the World, as their Way of Living; An entire Change of Manners, and an effectual mortification of their Passions and Desires. He that retreats out of any other design, but the Service and Honour of God, and the Salvation of his Soul, will be so far from avoiding Misery and Trouble, that he will involve himself in new and greater Troubles, and become more exquisitely wretched then the Affairs of the World could make him. No body can continue easy in his own Mind, who does not endeavour to become least of all, and Servant of all.

Remember then that you come to Obey, and not to Govern: The State of Life to which you are called, is a State of Labour and Hardship, and much Suffering;

ing; not of Leisure, and Ease, and Diversion. You do not so properly forsake, as change your Business. For this sort of Life is such a Trial of Man, as the Fire is of Gold : And none make good their Post in it, but such as are content to humble themselves, and heartily and chearfully submit to any Thing, for God's sake.

C H A P. XVIII.

Of the Examples of Holy Men in former Ages.

IT will much contribute to our Progress and Encouragement in Christian Virtues, to keep in View those lively Patterns, which those holy Fathers have set us, whose Zeal and exalted Piety shone clear in former Generations. For, by observing the Brightness of their Lustre, we shall at the same time discern the Faintness and Dimness of our own Light, and blush to find the present Age so much eclipsed by the unequal Comparison. Alas ; How poor and mean are our Attainments when put into the Balance with Theirs ! Those excellent good Persons, those affectionate Friends and Followers of Christ, served God instantly, in Hunger and Thirst, in Cold and Nakedness, in Labour and Weariness, in Watchings and Fastings, in Prayers and holy Meditations, in many Persecutions and sharp Reproaches.

Blessed God ! How many, how grievous Miseries and Hardships did the Apostles and Martyrs, the Confessors and Virgins endure heretofore ! And not They only, but all those brave and generous Souls in the Primitive and purer State of the Church, who made it the Study of their whole Lives to tread in the Steps of their meek and suffering Saviour ! These heavenly-minded Persons have hated their own Lives unto the

Death, that they might preserve them unto Life eternal. How very austere, how entirely mortified, was the Conversation of the ancient Hermits in the Desarts ? How long, how sharp the Temptations they underwent ? How fierce and frequent their Conflicts with the Enemy of Souls ? How constant and fervent their Prayers ? How rigorous their Abstinence, how unblemished their Chastity ? How eager their Desires, how indefatigable their Endeavours after higher Degrees of Perfection ? How vigorous and gallant the War they waged against their Vices and rebellious Appetites ? How pure and uncorrupt all their Intentions, how free from any Mixture of worldly Prospects, and sincerely fixed upon God and his Glory ? The whole Day they employed in hard Labour, the whole Night in Devotion. From which their very Labours did not hinder them ; for even these were consecrated too, by the frequent intermingling of Prayers and holy Ejaculations.

Their great Care, in a Word, was, That no Portion of the Time God gave them in the Body, might be spent unprofitable : And what they laboured to make an Improvement, their Zeal made a Delight. For Time in their Esteem was much too swift ; and their Devotions so far from creating Weariness, that every Hour seemed short, and snatched away those joys too hastily, which they felt in conversing with him whom their Soul loved. Their Thoughts were so intent, their Raptures so entertaining, so ravishingly sweet, that they became almost all Spirit, and quite forgot their Bodies, and the Care necessary for supporting them in Life. Riches, and Honours, and greatness, and Friends, and Relations, were now no longer their Concern. How should they ? when even a Part of their own persons ceased to be so ; and providing those things without which Mortals cannot subsist, was now grown a Trouble, and to Persons so abstracted from Flesh and sense, a painful and unseasonable Interruption of better and much more important Business.

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These Men, it is true, had no earthly Possessions ; but they who were Poor in that respect, were exceeding Wealthy in another, rich in the Favour of God, and abounding in excellent Virtues. What they wanted of outward Comforts, was much better supplied by the plentiful Communications of divine Graces, the inward Refreshments and unspeakable Consolations of the blessed Spirit. These Strangers to the World were intimately acquainted with its Maker and Lord ; and, how meanly soever they might think of themselves, or how despicable they might appear in the Eyes of others, yet in the sight of God they were Particularly dear, highly honourable, and precious. They persevered in their Humility, and sincere Obedience, in their Courage and Constancy, their Meekness, and Patience, and great Charity. And by this continuance in well-doing, and contented suffering, they made daily Advances in spiritual Perfection, and attained to a wonderful high Pitch of Grace and Favour with God. By this exemplary Piety they are become proper Patterns for the Imitation of all devout Men in After-ages : And, tho' but a few in Number, ought to encourage and prevail upon us more powerfully to rival their uncommon Zeal, than the numerous Examples of negligent and lukewarm Christians should do, to slacken, and suffer our Piety to grow cold.

To these we may add the ardent Devotion of those holy Men, who retired from the World into Cloisters and Cells, which, at their first Institution, were Places of great Piety and severe Virtue. Their Prayers were frequent and devout, their Emulation in spiritual Perfections noble, their Discipline strict and well ordered ; their Obedience to Superiors modest and respectful. Even those Footsteps of their Piety still remaining, from which their Successors have since so scandalously degenerated, are sufficient to inform us, that the first Combatants in this War against the World and the

Flesh, were Men of Gallantry, and just Renown. But now alas ! how wretched a pass are we come to, when it is counted a Mighty Matter, if here and there one keep himself from transgressing the Rules of his Order, and patiently submit to those Exercises, which his Profession imposes upon him ?

Oh what a miserable Age of cold Indifference and wicked Carelessness are we fallen into ? How are the holy Flames of primitive Zeal extinguished ! And instead of being a Delight, how great a Weariness, how insupportable a Burthen, are religious Duties and Exercises become to us ! How wretched is that Stupidity, how profound that Sleep, which now oppresses the Spirit of Mankind, when so many bright Examples cannot prevail with us to shake off our Sloth and Slumber, nor awaken our Souls into any tolerable Concern for banish'd Piety and neglected Virtue !

C H A P. XIX

The Exercise of a truly religious Person.

THE Life of a Christian, who hath dedicated himself to the Service of God, should abound with eminent Virtues of all kinds, that he may be really the same Person, which he is by outward Appearance and Profession. Indeed he ought not only to be the same, but much more, in his inward Disposition of Soul ; because he professes to serve a God, who sees the inward Parts, a Searcher of the Heart and Reins, a God and Father of Spirits : And therefore, since we are always in his Sight, we should be exceeding careful to avoid all Impurity, all that may give Offence to him, whose Eyes cannot behold Iniquity. We should in a Word, so far as mortal and frail Nature can, imitate the blessed Angels

Angels in all Manner of Holiness, since we, as well as they, are always in his Presence. To this purpose it would be expedient, daily to renew our Resolutions of living well, and every morning to refresh and quicken that Zeal, with which they were made at first. To beg of God that he would help us, and enable us that Day to begin well ; To *begin*, I say ; for all that we have done hitherto ought in Lowliness of Mind to seem, and to be acknowledged by us, as nothing.

Great Diligence and Watchfulness is necessary, in order to discharging faithfully what we have intended, and resolved zealously. For if they, who are most sincere and vigorous in their Purposes, are yet too often weary, and remiss in their Performance, What do we think must needs become of those who purpose but very seldom, or very coldly ? It is true, indeed, the Occasions of our falling off, or fainting in our Minds, are various and many ; and seldom do we allow our selves in any Omission of Religious Duties, without even thus perceiving a very sensible Abatement and Decay of Zeal. The Perseverance of good Men, in the midst of so many Difficulties and Avocations, must be ascriber to God's Favour and Assistance, more than to any Care and Wisdom of their own. And good Men have always this Notion of the Thing. For they depend upon God for the Success of all they do, even of their best and wisest Undertakings. *Prov. xvi. 9. A Man's Heart deviseth his Way, but the Lord directeth his steps, says Salomon.* We may contrive and act as seems most adviseable ; *Ibid. i.* but, as the *very Preparations of the Heart*, by which we do so, are from the Lord ; so is the Event of our having done it, entirely in his Disposal.

If at any time a Religious Exercise be omitted, upon the Account of some other Act of Piety or some Work of Charity at that time inconsistent with it :

this does us no Disservice, and the Omission is easily repaired. But if thro' any Lothness or Indisposition of Mind, if thro' Laziness or any voluntary Neglect of our own, our customary Devotions be passed over; this is from a wicked Cause, and will not fail to have a very ill Effect upon us. When we keep our Zeal with all our might, and do our very best, yet even then we shall find our selves often defective. But tho' we cannot arrive at absolute Perfection, nor conquer all our Frailties, nor prevent all our Hindrances in Goodness; yet ought not this to discourage us from striving and resolving. And when we do so, we shall do well not to content ourselves with general Intentions, but bend our Forces against some particular Thing: And chiefly against such, as we have found by Experience to be the greatest and most troublesome Obstruction to our doing well. The Condition of our Affairs without, and that of our own Souls within, must be diligently considered, and reduced into the best Order we can; because both the Circumstances of the One, and the Dispositions of the Other, contribute greatly to our Furtherance in Piety.

It may be, you cannot at all Times recollect and call yourself to Account, but certainly you cannot want Opportunities of doing so once every Day at least. The Morning or the Evening are proper for it. In the Morning you may lay out your Business for the Day following; and at the return of Night again you may reflect what hath passed in the Day-time; how your Thoughts, and Words, and Actions, have agreed with the Scheme of Behaviour you laid before yourself. Where you have transgressed, how far exceeded or fallen short, and in what Instances (for alas! it is but too likely that you have in many Instances) offended God and Man. In this Scheme you form of living well, quit yourself like a Man, in resisting the Assaults of the Devil. To this End begin with keeping a strict hand

hand over your Appetite ; for when you have once attained to a rigid and masterly Sobriety, all other fleshly Desires and Temptations will be vanquished and kept under with much less Difficulty. To the same purpose, beware of Idleness ; be constantly in Action, let Reading, or Writing, or Praying, or Meditating, or Contriving somewhat for the good of Others, employ your leisure Hours. Some bodily Exercises are very fit to be used, but these will require Prudence in the Choice of them ; for all are not equally convenient ; and therefore the Nature and Degrees of them must be considered, as well as the Temper and Constitution of the Person consulted, to render them profitable.

Some religious Exercises the Community is concerned in, and they must be attended to in Publick. Others are Personal, and these will be best performed in private. This Distinction is of great Use, to keep Men from acting improperly ; for even a good thing may lose much of its Gracefulness and Commendation, by being done out of due place and time. Another necessary Caution, which many good People stand in need of, is, That you should not be so zealously bent upon any privat Devotions or Duties, as for their sakes to slight or disuse the Publick ; for these require at least an equal degree of your Esteem, and Care in the Attendance of them. But when you have discharged your Duty in that Point, and done all that your particular Station, or the Commands of your Superiors, require from you ; Then is the proper Season, and then you will do well, to return into your own Breast, and employ the remainder of your Time, as Piety and Religious Purposes shall direct. And here again a prudent Choice is needful ; For all sorts, even of Religious Entertainments, are not suited alike to our Spiritual Advantage. Some Difference arise from the Consideration of the Persons, and another very visible one from the different Times and Seasons of using them. Some
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are more proper for Holy-days, others for Common Days ; some for Festivals, others for Fasts, ; some for a time of Temptation and Affliction, others for a peaceful and serene State of Mind ; Some to Persons in Grief, or under calamitous Circumstances ; others for Prosperity, when the Spirits flow gayly, and our Hearts rejoice and sing for the Goodness of the Lord. Particularly it will be convenient in an especial manner to renew and raise our Souls, by very frequent and solemn Acts of Piety and Devotion, at the constant Returns of all the Christian Festivals. For these should represent to our Minds the eternal uninterrupted Festival of Joy and Thanks, celebrated by the Saints in Heaven. And this should put our Souls upon the Wings, inflame our Devotion, mount us up thither, and make us act even beyond ourselves ; more chearfully, more vigorously ; as if we were just then going to receive that Glorious Reward of our Labour, which these glad Seasons bring so lively Ideas of, to our Thoughts.

And, if the Time of our receiving that Reward be still delayed, let us be so thankful for a longer Time given us here, as at the same time to be humbled by that very length of Life, which the generality of the World are apt to esteem the greatest happiness that can befall them. Let us endeavour to do God still better Service, but let us suspect, that we have not served him yet as we ought. For, if we had, he would not have put off our Recompence to a farther Day ; and probable it is, that he does not translate us to Heaven as yet, because we are not fit for it. And let us therefore double our Care to qualify ourselves for that Glory which in his own appointed time shall not fail to be manifested in us. Come he most assuredly will,

Luc. xii. 37.

Matth. xxiv. and blessed is that Servant whom his Lord

47.

when he cometh shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, he will make him Ruler over all his Goods, and Partaker of the Joy of his Lord.

C H A P. XX.

Love of Solitude and Silence.

Reserve a convenient Proportion of your Time for privacy and Conversing with yourself; and let this be spent in frequent and thankful Reflections upon the Mercies of God; and in reading good Books. Among which I advise you by all means to let alone nice Disputes and unprofitable Speculations; and keep to such Subjects, as may be proper for the exciting your Zeal and quickning your Affections, rather than such as may employ the Subtilty of your Wit. Never fear that you shall want Leisure for these good Purposes. For if you will prevail with your self to abate the mere Impertinences of Life, the unnecessary Conversations, the Time spent in hearing and telling of News, in enquiring after, and spreading about idle Reports, and such as are either faulty or frivolous Wastings of your Time, you cannot want sufficient Leisure, and great Opportunities, for cherishing and improving holy and heavenly Meditations. Thus did the most eminent Saints industriously avoid Company and Business, and chuse to converse with God in private, as much, and as often, as possibly they could,

'Tis a good Reflection, which the Philosopher made of himself; That he never was in other Mens Company, but he came out of it less a Man than he went in. And this is what we may frequently confirm by our own Experience, after a great deal of Discourse hath pass'd. 'Tis certainly much easier for a Man to restrain himself from Talking at all, than to enter into Discourse, and not say more then becomes him: Infinitely easier to live at home and see no Body, than to go abroad into Company, and return innocent. A Man therefore, who makes inward and spiritual Perfection

fection his great End, must imitate the Blessed Jesus, and often withdraw himself from the Multitude. No one is qualified to converse in publick, who is not highly contented without such Conversations; nor to entertain, or receive Entertainment from others, who cannot entertain himself alone with Satisfaction. No Man is fit to govern, who hath not learned how to obey: No Man can enjoy Mirth with Safety, who is not at the same time in a Condition of rejoycing in a good Conscience: None is fit to speak freely, but he who can, without any Violence to himself, refrain his Tongue, or keep Silence altogether.

Accordingly we may observe that the Pleasures and inward Security of the best Men have always been tempered with the Fear of God. Nor was their Humility or their Care one whit abated, in Consideration of those extraordinary Virtues, and abundant Measures of Divine Grace, in which they excell'd common Christians. But the Security of Wicked Men, and that Satisfaction they take in themselves, spring from Pride and Haughtiness of Temper; and therefore the constant Effects of it are an undue Contempt of others, and a false Opinion of themselves.

Never flatter yourself with an Expectation of absolute Safety in this Life, whatever your Condition, how far so ever retired from the World, or out of the way of Temptation, it may seem to be. For it often happens, that those, whom the World esteems in Strength and Virtue above common Men, have been involved in Dangers proportionably greater than Theirs; merely upon the Account of the too confident Opinion they had of their own Abilities. And this Consideration makes the being tempted sometimes a Blessing, greater than of living altogether easy and free from Temptation. For the oftner we are attack'd, the greater Check this gives to our Self-conceit and Spiritual Security; and the more we are afflicted, the less apt we shall

shall be to love or use the external Advantages of this World, beyond the Bounds of Decency and Moderation. And if a Man could so perfectly draw off his Mind from these, as never to pursue any transitory Pleasure; never to engage himself with the World; O what blessed, what perpetual Peace of Conscience would that Man feel, and even be ravished with! Nay, could we but cut off all our unprofitable and groundless Fears and Cares, and employ our Thoughts upon such Objects only, as are weighty and useful; such as promote the Honour and Service of God, our own Salvation, and the Good of others; How easy and quiet, how free from all Reproach, would such a one's Breast be to him!

No Man deserves inward and heavenly Comforts, who does not diligently examine, and willingly afflict himself. To be qualify'd for this Solitude, it is absolutely needful to observe that Method recommended by

Psal. iv. the Psalmist, *Commune with your own*
Matth. vi. *Heart in your Chamber, and be still. Enter*
into thy Closet, and shut thy Door about thee,

says our Saviour. Advice, which can never be more seasonable, than upon these Occasions: For the Closet will give you the Satisfaction, which it is scarce possible not to lose in a more publick Place. And if the Closet be not pleasant, the only Reason is, That it hath been less frequented than it ought. To those who at first use this Retirement carefully, it ministers a Pleasure and secret Consolation, above what any Company or Diversion in the World can pretend to.

It is by silent and solitary Study, that the Soul gets acquainted with the hidden Mysteries of Scripture. Here she finds those Floods of pious Tears, by which holy Men wash themselves Day and Night; here she contracts a Familiarity and free Intercourse with God, so much the closer and more intimate, as she removes to a greater Distance from the Noise and Hurry of the World

World. Think not then, that the Man who withdraws from his Friends and Acquaintance is perfectly alone. No, he only changes that for better Company, and is visited in his quiet Retreats by God and his holy Angels. A wise Man would rather chuse to live thus unobserved, and to prosecute the Business of his Soul without Interruption, than even to work Miracles, and attract universal Admiration and Applause, at the expence of neglecting his own Safety.

It is highly agreeable to the Character of a Person entirely devoted to God, to stir but seldom abroad, to decline being publickly seen of Men, and to be as little fond of seeing the World. For to what purpose indeed should any one be eager to see that which he must not enjoy? *The World passeth away, and all the desires thereof*, says the Apostle. Our sensual Affections invite and entice us, but when the moment of gratifying that Inclination is once over, what have you got by the Bargain, but serious Remorse, and an unsettled Temper of Mind? He that goes out full of Satisfaction, often returns as full of Melancholy and Disgust; and many a Merry Evening occasions a Sad Morning. Thus all the Pleasures of Sense caress and court us at the first meeting, but at their parting leave a Sting behind, and gall our Hearts with sharp and killing Pains. What can you see in any other Place, which the most retired Grove or Desert will not present to your Eye? Here you survey the Heavens, here view the Earth, here see the several Elements, which are the Seeds and first Ingredients, of which the whole World and every Creature in it are compounded.

But what can you see either here or any where else, which is of long Continuance? You expect perhaps, that Variety will satisfy you: Alas! it cannot be. For, suppose you could at one View have all things under the Sun set before you; what is there even in this, save only the beholding them with your Eyes? Turn then
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those Eyes where they may gaze with Profit. Look up to God on high ; fix them upon the Throne of Grace in Prayer, and continue stedfast and fervent in this, till you obtain Pardon for your Sins and Errors. Leave the Vanities of the World to the vain Men of the World ; But consider that you are a Child of God, and therefore bend your Thoughts and Labours entirely to those Things, which your Heavenly Father requires at your Hands. Invite that Jesus, in whom your Soul delights, into your Apartment ; there solace yourself with his Love ; for in that Conversation only true Peace and solid Joy are to be found. If this seem a Paradox, I must inform you what is the true Occasion of its doing so. Had you never mingled yourself with the World, nor imbibed any of its vain Nations, your Mind had been more settled and composed. But now the Itch of Novelty hath taken hold of you, and it must cost some Uneasiness to cure this Evil. And till that Cure be effected, Peace and perfect Evenness of Temper you cannot have, nor be reconciled to Solitude, and the substantial Pleasures that attend it.

C H A P. XXI.

Compunction of Heart.

HE that would grow in Virtue and Grace, must be sure to preserve a constant awful Sense of the Divine Majesty upon his Mind ; Checking by this holy Fear all his indecent Liberties, keeping his Appetites and Affections under strict Discipline ; and not letting himself loose to light or extravagant Mirth. Employ yourself therefore in humbling and afflicting your own Mind, and this will certainly lead you to a devout and truly Christian Temper. For infinite Advantage

is to be had by these zealous Exercises, which Folly and Inconsideration quickly lose again. One would wonder indeed, how Men can indulge their Mirth to so extravagant a Degree; when the Miseries of this Life, and the Sins we have to account for, are so many and so great, that a Man who seriously considers the Danger his Soul is in, can very hardly be merry at all, without some sudden Damp upon his Spirits. It is from the Levity of our own unthinking Minds, a stupid Forgetfulness of our sinful Condition, and a continuing insensible of those Sorrows which ought most tenderly to affect us, that we so often indulge the Excesses of Laughter and Gaiety, when Sighs and Tears would much better become us.

Assure yourself, there can be no true Liberty, no innocent Merriment, without the Fear of God, and a good Conscience. Happy therefore is the Man, who can disengage himself from all those Hindrances, which the Business and Diversions of the World cast in his way; and can give his Thoughts up entirely to that godly Sorrow, which worketh Repentance and Salvation. Happy He, that abandon every thing by which his Conscience is defiled or burthened; and set himself at Liberty from treacherous and ensnaring Pleasures. And this may be compassed by Resolution and Constancy. For, how difficult and contrary soever it may seem to the general Way of the World, and our own former Practice; yet no Habit is so strong, but by frequent and Manly Attempts, the direct contrary Habit may be acquired and confirmed.

If you will firmly set yourself to let other Peoples Affairs alone, they will follow the Example, and not concern themselves with yours. Do not therefore create unnecessary Trouble to yourself, by making other Mens Business your own, and involve your Thoughts and Cares in Matters of Persons above you. Leave the great ones of the World to manage their

own Concerns, and keep your Eyes and Observation at home. Your own Soul is the Thing you ought to look after. This requires your nicest Inspection, and utmost Diligence; and the Censuring and Correcting yourself is a Duty, which should take place above the Advising or Reproving the dearest Friend you have. It may be, this Reserve may be interpreted Sullenness, and lose you the Favour and good Esteem of Men; but let not that Loss afflict you. There can be no so just Ground of Dissatisfaction and Remorse, as the not behaving yourself with all the strict Virtue and Circumspection, which becomes a Person who hath renounced the World, and devoted himself to the Service of God. 'Tis true, an honourable Opinion of us is a Comfort: But it is sometimes better to want Variety of Comforts, than to have them. This is often the Case with Advantages merely human, the External, and the Worldly: And, as for those which are Spiritual, and derived from God, if we be either deprived of these, or not sensible of their sweet Refreshment; the Fault is our own, who neglect to put ourselves into a fit Disposition for them, by godly Sorrow for our Sins, and abandoning those vain and outward Comforts, which should make Room for the Substantial and Heavenly.

Get therefore a true and perfect Knowledge of yourself; see and confess, that you deserve not any Divine Consolation, nay, that you do really deserve Desertion, and Sorrow, and much Misery. When a Man's Mind is inflam'd with a truly religious Zeal, this World appears not only flat and insipid, but very bitter and loathsome to him. A good Man can never fail of discovering just Matter of Grief, and many Occasions that provoke his Tears. For, whether he consider his own Circumstances, or those of other Men, he will find that no Man here is exempted from Calamities. And the more closely he considers his own Condition, the greater still

will be his Concern. But the Misfortunes from without might be born with better Temper, were there not much more grievous from within. For, of all the Miseries that humble our Souls with Sadness, none are so justly lamented as our Sins, and Infirmities; the wretched Load and Incumbrance these are to our Conscience; and the Indisposition, the Disability they bring us under, of attending without Distraction to holy Duties and Heavenly Contemplations.

By these we are engaged upon trifling and unprofitable Thoughts, and diverted from weighty and useful Subjects. For would we but turn the Current of our Thoughts another way, the Effect would be visible and very happy. If we did but seriously reflect, how certainly we must die, as often as we think how long it is likely we may live; we should be more zealous and diligent to amend our Lives, and provide for that important Change. And would we but set before our Minds a lively Representation of those dreadful Torments which await the Damned in Hell; it were not possible sure to shrink back as we do, from the Austerities and Mortifications of a Religious Life; or to suppose any Labour and Pain which we can undergo in the meanwhile, a Hardship not most willingly to be chosen, for the preventing so dreadful a Condemnation. But now, because these things are but seldom and very slightly thought upon, and we, in tenderness to our own Ease, much rather submit to the soothing Impressions of present deceitful Pleasures, than to those harsh and cutting ones of future Misery and Anguish; we still go on in the same Coldness and Indifference, and indulge our Sloth at the Expence of our Virtue.

I grant indeed, that some Religious Severities are tedious and painful to the Body. But the Fault does not always lie there; for the Body sometimes complains and droops, not so much from its own Suffering, as from the Meanness and Cowardice of the Soul, which

Which ought to encourage and support it. Beg therefore of God most earnestly that he would kindle in your Hearts a true Christian Courage and fervent Zeal, Dare to entertain yourself upon the most ungrateful, when they are profitable and necessary Subjects. Prefer the Mournings of a Pious Penitent before all the vain Jollity of a wicked and unthinking World ; and pray that God would do to thee, what the Psalmist says he does to his own People, *even feed thee with the Bread of Tears, and give thee Plenteousness of* *Psal. lxxx. 5.*
Tears to drink.

C H A P. XXII.

The Miserable Condition of Man considered.

Wretched thou art, O Man, wheresoever thou art, Wretched thou must be, which way soever thou turnest thyself : Beset on all sides with Miseries without Remedy, without any possibility of Escape by Human Helps ; and only to be avoided by taking Sanctuary in God. Why then art thou disquieted at Crosses and Disappointments ; when these are the Portion of all Mankind ? It is not yours and mine alone, but the greatest, the best Men drink of the bitter Cup : And no Man ever lived in uninterrupted Happiness : None ever succeeded in all his Wishes and Attempts ; None ever was above Calamities, or free from Vexation of Spirit, Since therefore so ordained it is, that all must suffer and be miserable, are all equally so ? No, there are different Conditions and Degrees of Suffering ; and His is certainly the best and most comfortable, who is called and disposed to suffer for the sake of God and a good Conscience.

It is usual for Men, who know no better, to envy and admire the Rich, the Great, the Honourable; to imagine, that Princes and Persons of plentiful Fortunes are compleatly happy. But this is the Effect of great Weakness and Inconsideration. If therefore we would rectify such Mistaken Apprehensions, let us get a right Notion of Spiritual and Heavenly Advantages. These will convince us, of what poor account all worldly Enjoyments should be in our Esteem; How very little, how mere a nothing they are; how hard and hazardous to be attained; how uncertain the Preservation of them, and how full of Trouble and anxious Care, even while we have them. And who would be fond of that, which can neither be got, nor lost, no, nor kept neither, without Fear, and Sorrow, and perpetual Solitude? Surely then the Happiness of *Luc. xii. 15.* Man does *not consist in the abundance of the Things which he possesseth.* 'Tis senseless and absurd to think it can. And if no proportion of worldly Goods, tho' never so large, can exempt us from Misery; then a competent Measure of them ought to satisfy us. For Miserable we must be with less or more. The very living here upon Earth, without any additional Calamity, would make us inevitably so. The more a Man desires and labours to be like God, the less agreeable Relish he hath of Life; because he is so much more sensible, more thoroughly convinced, of the Frailty and Corruption of Human Nature. For, what is this Vicissitude, this daily Round of Eating and Drinking, Sleeping and Waking, Weariness and Rest, and the many other Necessities, which the Condition of Mortality enslaves us to? Doubtless it is a mighty Burthen and Affliction, to Men whose Minds are wholly fixed upon higher Things, and whose only Ambition it is to get above Sin and Infirmary.

For the Distresses and Wants of the Outward Man are a sore Hindrance and great Oppression to the Inward;

ward, and we shall not perhaps injure *David's* Sense, by supposing even these included in that Petition, where he begs of God to *deliver him out of his Troubles*. But wretched are They *Psal. xxv. 17*, indeed, who are not sensible of their Wretchedness; And yet more so still are those vain People, who are even in Love with it; Who dote upon this Mortal Life, which exposes them to it; and cannot think of parting with it at any rate, even when in such uncomfortable Circumstances, that all their Time and Care is scarce sufficient to furnish them with Provisions necessary for the Support of it. And yet these infatuated Creatures are content to lay themselves out upon Toil and Trouble; and, might they but be suffered to continue here for ever, could dispense with any Concern for God and Goodness, and willingly forego the Hopes and Everlasting Happiness of a Heavenly Kingdom.

O foolish and slow of Heart to understand and believe your true Interest; How deep are you immersed in Flesh and Sense? How sottishly deluded with Dross, and fond of Vanities which cannot profit? Have you no Notion left of any Thing but Body? No Regard for a future enduring Substance? Raise your Affections up to nobler Enjoyments, and disengage them from those gross, those empty Objects, which, if you still persist in the Love and Pursuit of, you will one Day be taught by sad Experience, how poor and despicable they really are, and how unworthy of all that eager Concern you have thrown away upon them. Be persuaded then by Reason and Religion, and do not provoke God to convince you by Torments and too late Remorse, of how fatal Consequence the Love of this World is, to all that are immoderately fond of it. View well those Illustrious Patterns of Mortification and Heavenly-mindedness, which the Primitive Saints and Favourites of Christ have set you. These

great good Men had small Regard to the Pleasures of Sense, and glittering Gayeties of this World, but kept their Eyes and Hearts intent upon Eternal Joys : Those were their Hope, their Delight, the earnest and only Longing of their Souls : And therefore the Only one, lest if their Affections were at all divided, the Love of the Things that are seen, should fasten down their Hearts to mean and earthly Objects, and hinder them from soaring up on high to the infinitely more precious Things that are not seen.

This is indeed a Work of Pains and Time ; but let not that Consideration drive you to despair of attaining an Heavenly Temper of Mind. The Undertaking is great, 'tis true ; and the Time allowed for it but short ; but still this short Space is enough, if you will take care to make the best of it. Up then, and be doing ; do not purpose well to Day, and put off the Execution to a farther Day, but rather argue yourself into Action by such Reflections as these. This very Instant is the proper Time, This the Season of Amendment, and fighting the good Fight. It is by Hardship and Suffering, that Men recommend themselves to the Acceptance and Favour of God. He hath ordained, that Fire and Water, Distress and Tribulation should be the Way that leads to Refreshment and true Bliss. Without some Violence upon theyself, Sin cannot be subdued, nor evil Customs broken. Without some Uneasiness and Pain we cannot live ; And while we carry this Body of Flesh about us, these will make an inseparable Part of the Burthen. We wish indeed for Ease and untrubled Satisfaction ; but, as the Condition of Mankind stands at present, we wish in vain. For, in losing the Innocence of our Nature, we lost our Happiness too ; and as both left us, so both must be restored, together. Patience is now become a necessary Virtue, and we must be content to wait the Season of God's Mercy ; when he shall fully

fully repair our Breaches, heal our Infirmities, put a Period to our Unrighteousness, absolve the Guilt, blot out the Remembrance of them, and cause Mortality to be swallowed up of Life.

In the mean Time, it cannot methinks but be a mighty Mortification, to consider how exceeding prone this frail Nature of ours is to Sin. To day you confess your Sins to God, and to morrow you act those very Sins over again, which you lamented but the Day before. This Hour you resolve to be watchfull, and take good heed to all your Ways; and the very next Hour you run on as giddily and rashly as ever, forget your Resolutions, and stand more Self-condemned than if you had never resolved at all. So great Reason is there for thinking very meanly of ourselves, and disclaiming all vain Confidences in any Thing we are, or do. But these so sudden and frequent Relapses are not our Misfortunes, but our Faults. They are indeed the Consequents of our Frailty; but that Frailty would not affect us to that Degree, did not we contribute to it by our own Negligence and Inconstancy. And a small Neglect will soon undo, what cost much Time and Labour to effect; nay, what could not have been effected even so neither, had not Almighty God seconded our Endeavours with his Divine Assistance.

But if we cool so very quickly, and *cannot Watch one Hour*, what will become of us at last, and how shall we persevere in Faithfulness unto the End? Wretched are we indeed, if we faint and grow weary, if we give out and seek Refreshment, as if we were already safe and in absolute Peace; when we have scarce begun the Battel, and gained but little Ground in Holiness and Reformation of Manners. Alas! we are as yet but raw Beginners; so far from compleat Masters in our Business, that we have still need to learn and practise the very first Rules of Living over again; be-

fore we can be so perfect as we wish and ought to be. Nor should we disdain to do so, if those Condescensions can prove of use to us.

C H A P. XXIII.

Meditation concerning Death.

SINCE Life is of short and uncertain Continuance, it highly concerns you to look about you, and take good heed how you employ it. To Day the Man is vigorous, and gay, and flourishing, and to Morrow he is cut down, withered and gone. A very little Time carries him out of our Sight, and a very little more out of our Remembrance. O the Hardness of Men's Hearts ! O the wretched Stupidity ! that fixes their whole Thoughts and Care upon the present ; and will not be prevailed with to look before them, or bear any Regard to that which must come hereafter. Whereas in Truth, every Work, and Word, and Thought, ought to be so ordered, as if it were to be our Last ; and we instantly to Die, and render an Account of it. Would we entertain ourselves more with the Thoughts of Death, it would be less a Terror to us : For, in proportion as our Lives amend, our Fears will abate, and a clear Conscience will enable us to meet Death with undaunted Courage. However Flesh and Frailty may impose upon us, yet, be assured, 'tis greater Wisdom to be afraid of Sinning, than to be afraid of Dying ; a greater Blessing to preserve our Innocence, than to prolong our Lives. And whence is all this Fear and Anxiety ? It is because we are not fit to Die ? But if you are not fit to Day, how do you propose to be so to Morrow ? Alas ! to Morrow is uncertain ; neither You, nor I, nor any Man, can depend upon

upon it. Or if we could, yet what does it avail to Live, tho' it were much longer, when we by longer Living grow so little better? Assure yourself, long Life is far from being always a Blessing. Too many (God knows) are so far from growing holier, as they grow older, that the Number of their Days only adds to the Number of their Sins, and renders their Account more heavy hereafter.

Happy is that Man who can comfort himself with having employed any one Day of his Life so perfectly well, as he might, and ought to have done. Many reckon up the Years of their Conversion with great Satisfaction, and think it a mighty Matter that they have so long abandoned the World and a vicious Course. And yet, when the Time they boast of comes to be compared with the Improvements they have made, how shamefully little is the Good they have done! If Dying now be terrible, yet remember that Living longer may be dangerous; and many, many a Man finds too great Occasion to wish, that it had pleased God to take him away sooner. Happy therefore is He who keeps the Hour of Death constantly in View? and from this Prospect of what must come, takes care to reconcile himself to it, and to put his Soul into a proper Temper for it, when it does come.

If you attend at any Time upon a Death-Bed, and see another in his Parting Agonies; consider that this Friend is gone the same Way where you must shortly follow him. In the Morning, question whether you may live till Night; and when Night comes, do not too confidently promise yourself another Morning. Thus shall you be in a constant Expectation, and in a good Disposition to die. And be sure so to live always, that Death may never overtake you unprovided, nor its suddenest Approach be sudden and surprizing, in respect of You. Many are snatched away in an Instant, and die when they were not in the least aware

Matth. xxiv. aware of it, for in such an Hour as we
 44. think not, the Son of Man cometh Let

not the Preparation I am advising, be neglected, as a melancholy unpleasant Thing; such as embitters Life, and damps Mens present Enjoyment; for be assured, whatever Satisfaction you may take now, when that last Hour draws on, it will give you quite other Notions of the Matter. And the Reflections upon your past Improvidence and Neglect will be more bitter and afflicting then, than any the most solicitous Forecast for Dying well, can possible be in the mean time.

O how wise, how happy is that Man, who makes it his daily Care to be such while he liveth, as he desires to be found when he comes to die! We may cherish a good Hope and great Assurance of leaving the World to our Comfort and infinite Advantage, if, while we continue in it, we can bring ourselves to neglect and despise it: If we be zealous to improve in Virtue, in love with Discipline and Mortification; if we attend to the Exercise of Repentance; if we be of an humble and obedient Disposition; content to deny ourselves, and ready to undergo any Hardship for Christ's sake. But if these Qualifications be necessary, they are necessary to be attained in Health. For then a Man is in a Condition to strive, and to exert himself; but when Sickness is upon him; it is a great Question what he will be able to do, or whether any thing at all. Whatever the generality of the World may imagine, who put off their great Work till such improper Seasons; yet sure it is, that few, but very few, are reformed by a Sick Bed, And they who defer their Repentance and Amendment till then, seldom, alas! repent as they ought, or are amended in good earnest.

Depend not upon the Assistance of your Relations and Acquaintance: Nor cherish an Imagination so vain, as that their Prayers hereafter can effect what you ne-

ver endeavoured to effect here. These can do you no Service : But if they could, yet, when once gone, you will be forgotten much sooner then you are willing to believe. And why should you rest upon Their Care, when you cannot be prevailed with for your Own ? Can it be supposed, They should be more concerned for your Salvation, than You, whose proper Interest it is ? Allowing then, that these could do you good, yet even thus, 'tis better you should do your own Business ; better, in regard of the Person, and better in regard of the Time : For *now* is the Season of Acceptance, *now* is the Day of Salvation. And therefore this Moment is the fittest for your Purpose : The sooner you change, the better : Live then while you may ; and begin from the present Minute to live so, that you may live for ever. For if you suffer the happy Opportunity to slip through your Hands, you will wish for it afterwards, when it is too late ; and you may perhaps be reduced to such Circumstances, that One Day, One Hour, for making your Peace with God may not be obtained ; no, not when you would gladly give, were it at your Disposal, the whole World to purchase it.

Consider then, my Friend, and Fellow-Christian, consider what a Risque you run by your Delays : Think, what Misery and Danger, what Confusion and Despair it is now in your Power to prevent, by living like a Man that remembers he must die. And therefore so spend every Hour, that when your last draws on, you may receive it with Joy and Hope, instead of Fear and Astonishment. Learn *now* to Die daily, to Die to Sin and the World, that you may then begin to Live with Christ. Learn *now* to despise all here below, that you may then be disengaged, and at perfect Liberty to leave all and follow Christ. Subdue your Body *now* by Mortification and Self-denial, and you shall then have great Boldness in the Day of Tribulation.

Does any Confidence of long Life encourage you to defer putting this Good Advice in Execution speedily? Nay, but reflect, fond Man, how little you can promise yourself one poor single Day. How many Instances have you before your Eyes, or fresh in your Remembrance, of Persons miserable deluded and disappointed in this Hope, and hurried out of the Body without any warning at all? How often have you been surprized with the News of this Friend being run thro', another drowned in crossing the Water, a Third breaking his Neck by a Fall, a Fourth fallen down dead at Table, or choaked with his Meat, a Fifth seized with an Apoplex at Play, a Sixth burnt in his Bed, a Seventh murdered, an Eighth killed by Thieves, a Ninth struck with Lightning, or Blasting, or Pestilence, a Tenth swallowed up in an Earthquake. Such vast Variety of Deaths surround us, and so fleeting a Shadow is the Life of a Man.

And if any of these happens to be your Case, Who shall help, Who can save you, when the precious Opportunity is fled and lost? Be doing then betimes; for, tho' you cannot so much as guess at the Hour and Manner of your own Death, yet safe you are, or may be, if you will provide against it. Use Time then while you have it; make haste to be rich toward God, and let Religion and your own Salvation be your Chief, your Only Concern, *Make yourself Friends* *Luc. xvi. 9.* while you may, *who when you fail may receive you into everlasting habitations.*

Behave yourself as a Stranger and Pilgrim upon Earth, and entangle not your Thoughts in Matters which do not belong to you. For Sojourners are not Proprietors, and therefore such should keep their Minds loose and free, and not settle their Affections upon things, which they are leaving very shortly: *Raise your Soul to God, and let it not dwell there, where you have no continuing* *City.*

City. Look up to that which is so, and send your Prayers, and Tears, and earnest Desires before you thither ; that when God calls, you may readily follow in Person, and make a happy Exchange of this miserable World for a better.

C H A P. XXIV.

Of the Last Judgment, and the Eternal Punishment of Ungodly Men,

W*Hatsoever thou takest in Hand, remember the End, and thou shalt never do amiss, says the Wise Son of Sirach . And certainly this would prove a most useful Direction, if we by* *Ecles.vii.36.*
 the End understand that last great Account, which will one Day be required of all our Actions, For how powerful, how happy a Restraint should we live under, did we but seriously reflect, and constantly ask our selves, how we shall dare to stand before that strict and righteous Judge, to whom *all Hearts are open, all Desires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid ?* One, who cannot, like other Judges, be diverted from the steady Course of Justice, blinded by Bribes and Presents, or softened by subtle Extenuations, or imposed upon by feigned Excuses, and Studied Evasions ; but who weighs all Persons and Causes by the Eternal Standard of Equity and Truth. Ah' wretched Guilty Creature ; Ah, stupid Unthinking Sinner ! that tremblest at the Frown of a Man like thyself, and canst ~~not~~ fear that Bar, where nothing can turn to thy Prejudice, but open and notorious Faults ! How wilt thou appear at this Tribunal, or what Plea canst thou urge in Bar of Sentence, to Him who needs no Evidence, but is himself privy to thy most concealed Impieties ? Dost thou

thou know this, and yet go on unconcerned how thou shalt escape the Terrors of that dreadful Day ? Without thy own Care, escape thou canst not : For this Judgment is universal ; All Mankind must stand upon their Deliverance ; every one must bear his own Burden, and every one's Burden is more than enough for himself ; so that no Man will be in a Condition of Assisting another. To expect any Advantage, any Atonement, then, is most senseless. Thou only canst prevent thy own Destruction, and this Life is the only Time of preventing it. Thy holy Labours now will turn to good Account ; thy pious Mournings move Compassion, thy Prayers and Groans enter the Ears of God, and melt him into Mercy. The Meek and Patient Man will then be considered for his constant Suffering and invincible Charity. The Grief he now conceives for Wrongs, is more for the Wickedness and Guilt of the Person who does them, than for any Inconvenience brought upon himself ; and this Disposition will mitigate his own Offence ; he heartily forgives, and prays that God would forgive his Enemies ; and this entitles him to the Forgiveness of his own Trespases. He is more easily provoked to Pity, than to Anger : And shall be dealt with accordingly, by a God long-Suffering, slow to Wrath, and sparing when Men deserve Punishment. He often treats his Body with Severity and Violence, and continues the rigorous Discipline, till the Flesh be effectually subdued by the Spirit ; and therefore good amends shall be made him for these voluntary Sufferings, and the neglected Pleasures of Sense will be liberally recompensed by the abundance of Heavenly and Intellectual Joys. But then, it is plain, these good Qualities which minister an Entrance into that Bliss, must be attained as soon as we can possibly. This present State of Mortality is the only Scene of Action and Improvement : and since this Scene so suddenly may change, we are
not

not save in the delay of one Moment. This is in truth our Case. But we are loth to understand it; and so inordinately fond of Sensual Delights, that we even take a Pleasure in imposing upon ourselves; and by the most fatal of all Infatuations, cherish and gratify our Bodies, at the Expence, and extreme Hazard of our Souls.

And what is the Effect of this, but heaping up more Fuel for everlasting Flames to feed upon? For our Sins and Lusts kindle and blow up those Fires; and the more heinous and impetuous these are, the fiercer and more furiously those will be sure to burn. For, as the Torments of ungodly Wretches shall there be exquisite for their Degree, so shall they for their Kind and Quality be suited and proportioned to the Sins of each particular Person; and so contrived, as to be most sensibly afflicting and painful to the respective Tempers and Complexions of Man, the Habits they have contracted, and the Appetites they have indulged. The Lazy and Stupid shall be awakened and roused into Sense, by sharp Scourges, and burning Stings. The Glutton and Drunkard gnawed with insatiable Hunger, and parched with unquenchable Thirst. The Nice and Delicate, who proposed no Happiness here to themselves, but Luxury and Pleasure, shall then be strangled with the noisom Vapours of flaming Pitch, and stinking Sulphur. The Envious and Discontented shall howl perpetually like mad Dogs. The Proud and Vain-glorious shall be confounded with Shame and Contempt. The Covetous shall pine away with extreme Penury and Want; and no one Vice shall escape a Torture, exactly fitted to make its Indulger the most miserable that it is possible for him to be. In a Word, One single Hour in those dismal pains and Horrors shall be more insupportable, than whole Ages of that Uneasiness, which Wicked Men here have so irreconcilable an Aversion

to submit to, for mortifying their Vanities, and amending their Lives.

For, (which is of all others the last and dreadfullest Aggravation) those Miseries and Tortures have no End, no Refreshment, no Intermiſſion. But the ſharpeſt Afflictions we endure in this Life, will quickly have a Period: They have their Interval of Eaſe and Comfort; and thoſe Sorrows, which we feel upon a Religious Account, are largely recompenſed with Spiritual Conſolations, and ſweet Peace of Mind. Do not then grudge a little preſent Grief; but mourn earneſtly for thy Sins, and bend thy utmoſt Thoughts and Care to the Subduing and Reforming them; that this ſhort Anxiety may deliver thee from eternal Deſpair, and Anguiſh unconceivable; and thoſe few Tears of Repentance, may ſecure to thee a Portion of Everlaſting Joy with the Bleſſed.

O happy Reverse of all their Grievs and Sufferings, which the Righteous ſhall find in that Day! when they ſhall ſtand full of Hope and humble Confidence before that Judgment-Seat, from which their Haughty and Mercileſs Oppreſſors, confounded with Fear, and amazed with Guilt, ſhall ſtrive and wiſh in vain to hide their trembling Heads. When he, who now ſtands tamely at the Bar of Men, and innocently ſuffers, ſhall then be advanced to a Throne, and placed among the Saints and Martyrs, to aſſiſt at the Tryal of his, once inſulting, Judges. When the Poor and Meek ſhall have great Boldneſs, while the Proud and great Sinner quakes at the Preſence of God and the Lamb. When that Piety and godly Fear, that Abſtinenſe and ſevere Virtue, that patient Enduring for Chriſt's ſake, which is now thought juſt Matter of Deriſion and Contempt, and counted Folly and religious Madneſs, ſhall then be acknowledged by its moſt ſatirical Scorners, to be indeed the True, the Only Wiſdom. When the Remembrance of paſt Miseries ſhall be ſweet, and They, whose

whose wicked Malice exercised such Patience, shall be struck dumb with sad Remorse and Bitterness of Soul. When all, who devoted themselves to God and his Service, shall be transported with Raptures of Joy; and all those who disregarded or despised them, shall weep and lament. When the Afflicted and Persecuted shall bless his bitter Cup, and feel more refined, more substantial Delights from it, than sensual Pleasures, or uninterrupted Prosperity could ever bring to the most Voluptuous and Fortunate. When the plain Dress of the Humble, and Sackcloth of the Penitent, shall shine glorious as the Sun; and all the gay Pomp and glittering Jewels of the Proud and gaudy Sinner shall be trampled under Foot like Dung. When the Cottage shall take place of the Court, Patience appear more eligible than the most boundless and arbitrary Power; the honest Obedience of an humble Faith, more wise, than the nicest Cavils of the subtlest Wit; and a good Conscience more useful Learning, than the most elaborate Systems of Philosophy. When the Contempt of Riches shall approve itself the greatest Treasure; devout Prayer the most delicious Entertainment; Silence and Caution the best Conversation. When good Works shall plead better than the most accurate Eloquence; Alms prove the most prevailing Advocate; Self-denial the most exalted Pleasure; and the Conquest of ill Habits the most glorious Triumph.

If then this be, (and this most assuredly is) a true Representation of that decisive Day: If this the different Fate and Effect of these so very different Persons and Practices; Consider, I conjure thee, the Circumstances of those Damned. And harden thyself from this Reflection, to endure a *Little* now, when *That Little* will secure thee against enduring infinitely more hereafter. Make tryal of thy self, and if the slight Difficulties of a Religious Life seem tedious and tiresome; turn the Argument against thy sensual Inclina-

tion, and think, how one who sinks under these, will be able to dwell with exquisite and everlasting Torments. Nor is this a trifling needless Enquiry, but absolutely necessary, and of mighty Moment. For Matters are so ordered, that perfect Ease can be no Man's Portion in *both* Worlds. They who chuse their good Things here, cannot have them hereafter too; nor shall any Man, who indulges Sense and Pleasure upon Earth, Rejoice and Reign with Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Suppose then, that, from your Entrance into the Body to this very Day, you had enjoyed the utmost your Heart could possibly desire, of all which this World calls Happiness; Honours, Riches Pleasures, without Check, or Stint, or Interruption: Yet what Good would all this do to you, if it should please God just now to strike you with Death? Do not you plainly see, without my prosecuting this Argument any farther, that all below is Vanity and mere Nothing, and that the Love of God and a Religious Life is the only Thing which can stand you in any stead? This will stick by you, when all the rest forsake you. This is neither destroyed by Death, nor afraid of Punishment, but Triumphs over both; fills the Man with Confidence and joyful Expectation at the dreadful Day of Judgment; and sets him above all the Terrors and dismal Apprehensions of Hell and its Tortures. But then, This is the peculiar Privilege of the Servants of God; for how is it possible for the Man who practise and delight in Wickedness, to think of Death and Judgment, without Fear and Perplexity of Heart? How should they enjoy Quiet, and be easy in their Minds, if they think at all what is coming apace upon them? Let then the Love of God prevail over that of Sin. But if thou art not yet perfect enough to be acted by this noble Principle; Let at least the Love of *thyself* reclaim thee, and the Fear of Hell restrain

restrain and deter thee from a Course, which must end at last in thy utter and inevitable Ruin.

This, says the Scripture, *is the beginning of Wisdom*; for he who is Proof against the Fear of God, cannot persevere in any thing that is good; as having no manner of Principle that can save him, no Curb upon his Mind that can awe, or hold him in, from running headlong into the Snares of the Devil.

C H A P. XXV.

Of Zeal in the Reformation of our Lives,

BE fervent in Prayer; serving the Lord, says the Apostle. And such indeed it highly concerns every one to be in his Service. For what is the End we propose, by dedicating ourselves in solemn Vows to Christ? Or to what purpose do we renounce the World and its Vanities; but that these sacred Ties may engage our utmost Watchfulness and Diligence, to consecrate our Persons and Actions, to conform ourselves to the Image of God, by living to him, and like him, and much above the Rate of common Men? Let not therefore these good Resolutions cool upon your Hands; but be zealous in Piety and Virtue. Consider that you shall shortly receive an ample Recompence for all your holy Labours, and see a happy End of Grief, and Fear, and Hardship. Be content with *Travel and Pain* for a very little while, and you shall be sure to find *Rest, and Peace, and Joy to your Souls*. The Yoke is easy and the Burthen is light; but the Weight of Glory is far more exceeding and eternal. Be but you careful to discharge your part, and then you need

Rom. xii. 11.

Matth. xi. 28

30.

2Cor. iv. 16.

never doubt God's making good his. Support and encourage yourself with the full Assurance of obtaining the Crown ; but take heed, that Assurance do not degenerate into Presumption ; nor the Prospect of Bliss, which should excite a more active and chearful Obedience, become an Occasion of Spiritual Security and Sloth.

I remember an Instance of a Person irresolute and wavering in the Concerns of his Soul, divided between Hope and Fear, who in his Prayers was earnestly intreating, to be assured of his own Perseverance ; and expressing, how happy he should think himself, could he but be satisfied in this Point. Whereupon he was immediately answered from within, *Well, and supposing you could be assured of this, how would you proceed then ? Do but act now, as you would think yourself obliged to do in that case, and never question your Persevering.* This comfortable Reply settled his Mind ; and, instead of indulging any curious Enquiries into Events, or anxious Doubts concerning the Success of his Endeavours ; he immediately applied himself to consider what God expected from him, and to set about the Performance of That, without more to do. *Trust in Psal. xxxvii. the Lord, and be doing good, says the Psalmist ; commit thy way to him, and he shall bring it to pass.*

The great and common Obstacle to vigorous Virtue is the dreadful Notion Men Form to themselves of the Difficulties attending it, and how laborious a thing Religion is. And true it is, Exalted Piety will cost many a sore Conflict. But even this Consideration may be some Encouragement too ; when we consider, that the Hardship of the Undertaking, and the Violence of the Opposition, add to the Glory of the Fight ; and entitle the Conqueror to a Crown so much brighter, as the Toil and Hazard of the Day he won, was greater. For the more a Man subdues himself.

self, and does Honour to the divine Grace, by rendering it victorious over Flesh and Blood ; the larger Measures of that Grace he shall obtain from God, and become more exemplary in the World.

There are not, 'tis confess'd, in every Man, the same Passion, or not the same degrees of them, to master and mortify. But tho' a Man, whose Affections are vehement, and his Disposition by Nature or Custom more stubborn and averse to Virtue; hath more to make his way thro': Yet if this Man's Resolutions be firmer, and his Vigor be proportionably greater; he shall be able to advance farther, than others of a quieter Temper, and less rebellious Passions, if that Sedateness at the same time dispose them to Ease and Inactivity.

Now in this Undertaking, Two things there are, of mighty Moment for promoting it. The *First* is, To observe the Tendencies of one's Temper and Constitution ; and take care to bend Nature the Contrary way, by keeping aloof off from all those Temptations and Occasions of sinning, with which we feel ourselves most easily beset, and strongly inclined to comply. The *Other*, to discover your peculiar Defects, and Labour with all our Might to attain those Virtues, which we chiefly want.

And as this Knowledge of our own Frailties and Necessities is greatly instrumental to our Improvement, so we shall do well to profit by what we see in Others, and to be particularly concern'd for avoiding and subduing those Habits, which we find most usual and offensive, in them with whom we converse. For the Commonness of any ill Thing is so far from extenuating the Blame of those who copy after it, that it is the direct contrary ; and such Examples should be look'd upon, as Marks which discover to us where the Rocks and Sands lie ; such as are set to warn us off, not to invite us in. Indeed a wise and good Man will turn Examples of all sorts, to his own Advantage.

The Good he will make his Patterns, and strive to equal or excel them. The Bad he will by all Means avoid. Or if by Reflection the Deformity of his Neighbour's Actions happen to represent that of his own, he will be sure to do so no more; and think it a happy Occasion, that he is thus grown wiser by the Folly of others. For we often see and judge that in the Deportment of those we converse with, which too near a Light will not let us discern, or Partiality let us condemn, in our own. And this should make us cautious, when we remember, that the Eyes of others are as sharp, as critical Observers, as severe Judges of Us, and all we do, as ours can possibly be of Them. From this universal Disposition to observe and judge, proceeds, no doubt, that pleasing Approbation, or vehement Dislike of Good and Bad Examples. For what indeed gives us a more sensible Satisfaction, than the seeing Men in every Point agreeable to their Character? When They, who call themselves by the Name of Christ and pretend in a peculiar manner to belong and be resigned up to him, are eminent in good Works and heavenly Disposition; when they submit entirely to his Yoke, and think nothing too much to do or suffer in Obedience to his Will; how charming, how delightful a Sight is this? And again, how offensive, how very shocking, when They, who make the same outward Profession, shall dishonour and defile it by a scandalous and profligate Conversation; and, instead of that severe, that Spiritual and Heavenly Life, to which their very Name, and the Pattern of their Master obliges them, abandon themselves to all manner of Excess, and wallow in the most brutish and detestable Pollutions? But, even where Men do not degenerate into all this Beastliness; where Cares and Business of the World divert and draw them off from better Employments, 'tis unseemly to others, and of ill Consequence to themselves, to neglect their proper Con-

cern,

cern, and engage their Thoughts and Time in Matters foreign to their main Design.

Quicken therefore yourself up to Duty, by the Remembrance of your Station, who you are, and what you have obliged yourself to be. Bear constantly about you a lively Idea of Christ crucified. Consider carefully his Life, and let the Perfection of That shame you into the reforming your own : Your own, I say, whose very *Baptism represents your Profession*, which is, *to follow the Example of our Saviour, and to be made like unto him* ; and yet, after so many Years being called a Christian, you are still too far from being one, if *Dying to Sin, and Living to Righteousness, as your Jesus died and rose again for you*, be that which makes a Christian, and distinguishes him from other Men. If Persons dedicated to Piety and Virtue, would but with due Attention fix their Thoughts upon the Actions and Sufferings of Christ, this single Subject would furnish them with Instructions and Motives abundantly sufficient for their Purpose. St. Paul, we see, determined to know nothing but *Jesus Christ, and him crucified* ; and this indeed, truly 1 Cor. xi. known, is the best, the most useful, and most comprehensive Learning.

This fires Men with an eager holy Zeal, and renders them not only exact, but chearful in their Duty ; it makes them perform what he commands with Diligence ; and suffer all that he ordains with Patience and Contentedness. Whereas a negligent and lukewarm Christian conspires against himself ; his Life is one perpetual Torment, for want of entire Resignation and fervent Love. The Trials and Afflictions bear hard upon his Spirit, and the Good he attempts is strained, and against the Grain. He feels not the Support of Spiritual Comforts ; he knows he must not have recourse to Worldly ones ; Or, if he might, they will not do his Business ; and so he is left destitute of all. For

by transgressing the Rules of Christian Discipline, he hazards the Safety of his Soul; and by seeking Relief in inconvenient Liberties, he creates fresh Torments to himself; because these cannot satisfy his Conscience, but will be sure to leave some Displeasure and Bitterness behind them. And who can ever be easy, who is reproached with his own ill Conduct, and chuses a Remedy worse than the Distemper?

To this Pattern set us by Christ himself, it will be of great use to add those of the Apostles, and other eminent Lights in the Church heretofore. These will convince us, what Excellencies mere Men are capable of; and if we heartily aspire after their perfections, we ought not to distrust God's Assistance; but may confidently promise ourselves, that an equal degree of Zeal will be supported by an equal Measure of Grace and Strength. Observe then their Austerities, their fervent Prayers and heavenly Meditations; observe the great and happy Efficacy of them, in raising those holy Persons above the World and its Temptations, and rendring their Conversation all heavenly and divine, even whilst upon Earth. It were indeed a desirable Thing, that we could so wholly abstract ourselves from Flesh and Sense, that the Praises of God, and Attendance upon his Commands, the Contemplation of his Glories, and the ravishing Satisfaction of devout Minds, might be our constant and only Employment. And happy should we be, if the necessary Cares of Life gave no Distraction to our Thoughts, no Interruption to those holy Exercises. But these are Charms and Joys reserved for a future and better State; We cannot here be so refined, we cannot be excused from the Incumbrances of the Body, and its inseparable Frailties and Necessities. And therefore the Virtue proper to our present Condition is of another Nature. Use these worldly Comforts we may, but we must not place

our Happiness in them ; live upon them our Bodies must, but our Souls should relish nothing but God. Whatever his Providence thinks fit for us, we are to receive with Meekness and Contentedness ; as being well assured, that His Wisdom *can*, and His Goodness *will* chuse and ordain what is best. *In the Day of Prosperity we may rejoice* ; but that Joy must be so tempered with Gratitude and Moderation, as neither to swell into Insolence and Pride, nor to engage our Affections in the Love of the World. *In the Day of Adversity we are to consider* ; and entertain the most calamitous Accidents, without Murmuring or Discontent, In every change of Circumstances, our Minds must be entirely resigned to God ; For he is all in all, Eternal and Unchangeable ; Perfect and Happy in himself, Absolute and sole Lord of the Universe ; and every Creature is, and ought to be, entirely at his Disposal.

But tho' He be always the same, and can at any time do what is good in his sight, yet this is by no means our Case. Frail, and of short Continuance is our Character ; and this should excite our Diligence, *to work while it is Day ; because our Night commeth on apace ; wherein no Man can work.* Consider *John. ix.* therefore, you must die ; die you know not how soon ; and be afraid lest that fatal Hour overtake you, before the Business of Life be finished. Remember that the Time once yours, can never be so again ; The Wealth of both the *Indies* cannot redeem one single Opportunity, which you have once let slip ; and therefore lay fast hold on all that offers, and suffer no Hour to slide by, without its due Improvement.

Virtue can never be attained without great Pains and Diligence ; and if you cool and linger in this Pursuit, the Moment that you gain not Ground, you lose it. For the Affairs of our Souls can never stand at one stay ; but, as oft as we favour ourselves in Point of Duty, we decline and fall back again toward Sin.

or at least into an Indisposition toward Goodness : But if we cherish our Zeal, and constantly blow up its holy Fires, by a vigorous Attendance upon our Business, we shall soon feel the Comfort of this kindly Warmth ; and all the Difficulties we found or formed to ourselves, will wear off quickly. God will give more Grace to him that uses what he gave formerly, and Virtue every Day will disclose her Charms, and make us more in Love with her. Then it is, that the Wise Man's Description is experimentally made good to us, *That her ways are ways of Prov. iii. Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.*

I readily acknowledge the Attempt, I am now advising, to be exceeding laborious and great : No bodily Toil is to be compared to it ; nor any Conquest over Temporal Enemies so hazardous and expensive, as that which we gain upon ourselves, and the Adversary of Souls. But as the Difficulty exceeds, so does the Benefit and Glory likewise. This Field must be fought, and won, or we are lost for ever ; and He, who does not inure himself to vanquishing, by subduing less Temptations, will never be able to grapple with more violent and trying Ones ; and Infirmities once yielded to, grow insensibly to stubborn Habits of Vice. This is a daily Warfare, and we may daily reap the Fruits of it. For every Night will crown us with fresh Laurels, and the Reflection upon a Day well spent, furnish us with Joys more pleasing than Ten thousand Triumphs. Since therefore every Day's Behaviour is of such mighty Consequence, in giving a turn to our Spiritual Affairs beware lest any pass unprofitably. Watch continually over thyself, and let not this necessary Fervour abate, for want of Care to cherish and excite it. Remember that your own Salvation is the Trust committed to your Charge ; a Trust of Importance greater than the whole World ; and therefore, whatever becomes of the rest, do You secure One. To admonish and reprove your
Brethren,

Brethren, while you overlook yourself, is a most preposterous Course ; 'tis neglecting your own Province, and invading another Man's. You have no Right to take the Mote out of *their* Eye, till the Beam be first cast out of *your own*. If *Matth. vii.* then you would escape the Censure of Hypocrisy, begin at Home to reform, and be sure to do that effectually. For the greater Violence you are content to put upon your own Inclinations, and the sorer Conflicts you undergo, the more meritorious is your Virtue, and the more abundant will be your Joy.

The End of the First Book,

OF

OF THE
IMITATION
OF
JESUS CHRIST.

The Second Book

CHAP. I.

The Life of the Spiritual Man.

THE Kingdom of God is within you, says our blessed Lord. Betake thyself *Luk. xvii. 21.* then entirely to God, love him with all thy Heart and all thy Soul, and bid a final adieu to this wretched World, and thou shalt find sweet Content, and Comfort unspeakable. Learn to despise these outward Vanities, and seek pure and spiritual Satisfaction. Place all thy Hopes, thy Happiness, thy Thoughts in them, and thou shalt feel this Kingdom spring up and grow within thee. *Rom. xiv. 17.* For the Kingdom of God is Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost: A Joy peculiar to the Saints, in which wicked and worldly-minded Men have no part. Christ will approach to those that fly to him for Refuge, meet and embrace them in

in his Arms, and fill them with his heavenly Consolations. He knocks, and waits to come in, and only stays till thou hast swept and garnish'd thy Soul, and prepared an Apartment, clean and fit for so pure, so divine an Inhabitant. For all his Charms and Glories shine inward. They are not like the Gaudy Poms and Glittering Outfides of Earthly Ornaments, but lie deep in the Breast of his Saints. There is his Beauty, there his sweet Conversation, there his Ravishing Comforts, there the Abundance of his Peace, and the Intimacy of his Friendship.

Come then, believing Soul, to work ; and employ all thy Diligence, to prepare thy Heart for thy Beloved ; that Heavenly Spouse, who will not disdain this poor and homely Mansion, and only ask thy Love and Care to make it worthy of him. Hear his own gracious Promise, *If a Man love me, he will keep my Words, and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.* John xiv. 23. Make room then for this Blessed Guest ; Cast out the Crowd of worldly Cares and Desires ; admit no Partner in thy Breast, but reserve thy whole Heart for this One Inhabitant. This one is enough, for he is all the World ; and if thou hast Him, thou hast Riches. and Honour, and Plenty of every Thing that is good. He will be thy Master, thy Protector, thy Counsellor, thy Agent, thy Friend, will take thy Cares upon himself, and manage all thy Concerns to the best Advantage ; nor shalt thou need any other Assistant, or ask Relief from Men. For why indeed from Men, whose Power is so short, and their Affections so inconstant ? They quickly change and mock the Hops of those that depend upon their kindness ; but Christ endureth for ever, is a sure Help in all his Servants Extremities. Supposing all the Sincerity and Zeal for our Service, that Man is capable of ; yet still he is but Man, mortal and frail, and cannot always have the
Abi-

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Ability, even when he hath most the Disposition, to relieve and do us good. Since then so little Confidence is due to his Succours, the Concern ought not to be great, if he withdraw or deny them ; if he oppose and grieve, and labour to do us harm. For this is frequently the Case, the Effect of a fickle Temper, that the very same Persons, who to Day are our dearest Friends, to Morrow shall be our bitterest Enemies. And they, - who now are most furious Adversaries, within, a little while come over to our Side. It cannot well be otherwise, in Persons so unsettled, so liable to turn with every Breath of Wind. Place then thy Hope and trust in him alone, with *whom is no James. i. 17. variableness, neither shadow of Turning.* Let him be the only Object of thy Fear and Love. In *him* thou art sure to find a constant and powerful Friend ; One who will heartily espouse thy Cause, and order Matters better than thou thyself, if left to thine own Choice, could possibly do. Alas ! thou hast here no continuing City, but art a Stranger and Sojourner, and must expect to find no Settlement, till possess'd of, and united to Christ.

Why do thy Anxious Thoughts look out for Ease and a fixed Happiness, in a Place which is not, cannot be thy Rest ? Thy Conversation ought to be in Heaven, for there is thy Home ; and all Things here should be no otherwise regarded, than as Refreshments and Conveniencies given to support thee in thy Journey thither : Things in Perpetual Motion, and such as pass away from thee ; and Things which thou thyself art passing away from too, as fast as Time and Mortality can carry thee. Do not then imagine, that they can stick by Thee, or thou by them ; but look upon them with an Eye of Indifference, and keep thy Soul disengaged. For if thou suffer them to fasten upon thy Affections, they will enslave thy Mind, and turn to thy eternal Ruin, Assert then and preserve thy

thy Native Liberty by raising thy Soul above this vain World, and fixing thy Desires and Meditations upon the most high God. Converse with Christ in Prayer, and let this be so constant, so intent, as to contract an intimate Familiarity with Him.

It may be, His Glories and divine Excellencies are Objects too refined and lofty for thy Contemplations to dwell upon with Relish and sensible Delight. But he hath condescended to thy mean Capacity; and, by becoming Man, afflicted Man, hath furnished us with Matter of Meditation, of a size with our Minds, while dwelling in Flesh. Consider then his Poverty and Sufferings. And if thou canst not soar up so high as Christ sitting on his Throne, behold him hanging on his Cross. Take Sanctuary in his Stripes and Wounds; and Death; those Stripes by which the World is healed; that Death, by which Mankind live. And if these be well attended to, they will Administer marvellous Strength and Comfort, to thy Adversities; enable thee to bear Wrongs with Ease, Contempt with Patience; Calumny and Detraction with Content. What! was the Son of God a Scorn of Man, and an Outcast of the People? Was the King of Heaven reduced to Wants and Necessities upon Earth, and had not so much as *where to lay his Head*? Was he, who *Luc. ix. 58.* loved his Enemies so tenderly as even to die for them, forsaken by his Friends? Did Christ submit chearfully to endure, and to be dispis'd? And dost thou, wretched Sinner; murmur and complain, when Poverty or Contempt come upon thee? when thy Friends desert, or thy Enemies slander thee? Did He undergo the Malice, and *Contraction* *Heb. xii. 3.* of Men, and dost thou expect that all Men should favour, and assist, and speak of Thee with Honour? Nay, wretched Man, entertain not so vain a Hope. It cannot be; it is not fit it should. For couldst thou be exempted from Injuries and Afflictions;

what Opportunity could there ever be for the Exercise of thy Patience? If nothing cross should happen in the whole Course of thy Life, how could'st thou approve thy Friendship and Love for Christ; How express thy Likeness to him? This the Apostle tells us, is the Condition, This the Way, that leads to Happiness; and they, who desire to Reign with Christ, must not think much to Suffer with him, and for him.

Oh! had we but, with *Thomas*, put our Fingers into the Print of his Nails, and thrust our Hands into his Side; Had we but acquainted ourselves with his Sufferings, by deep and serious Consideration; and tasted indeed the astonishing Greatness of his Love; the Joys and Miseries of this Life would soon become indifferent to us. Or rather, they would no longer be indifferent, but we should even rejoice in Tribulation, and triumph in the Opposition, and Shame, and wrongful Dealings of Men, which draw us to so much nearer and more lively Resemblance of the Blessed *Jesus*. For the Love of Christ teaches us to despise ourselves; and they, who do so, will bear the Reproaches and Despisings of others with Easiness and Temper. A Man, whose Soul is united to Christ in fervent Love, and who hath freed himself from Passions and Worldly Sollicitudes: This Man, I say, is as it were spiritualiz'd, can have recourse to God without Distraction, lives in a manner by, and within himself; nay, is raised above himself, and enjoys Heaven, while yet upon Earth. He that hath shook off the Falacies and Prepossessions of Sense, that sees and judges things, not after the deceitful Measures of Common Opinion, but by the Standard of Truth, and their own Nature; He is the Wise, the truly Learned Man, and he is taught this Wisdom, not by Human Methods, but by Instructions from above, from God the Fountain and Perfection of all Wisdom.

This Man can never want Opportunities of enjoying and improving his Happiness. The Interruptions, which common Men lament, cannot affect him. For nothing can take him from himself; and so long as he hath his own Breast to retire into, he cannot be deprived of a fit Place, and proper Season, for any holy Exercise. If Business and the World at any Time call him abroad, he always acts and converses there with cautious Reserve, and keeps it in his Power to recollect and retreat again at Pleasure. Bodily Labour is no Hindrance; for this employs but the least Part of him; the Cares of Life he never lays himself out upon; but suits his Temper to his present Circumstances, and only studies to keep his Mind easy and composed; The Unreasonableness, and Folly, and unaccountable Perverseness of other Mens Humour and Behaviour give him no Disturbance, for he is taken up with his own. In short, Every Man finds more or less Vexation and Obstruction in the Affairs of his Soul, as he engages himself more or less in the World; and as he chuses or refuses to make those things his Care, which are not properly so.

A Man, whose Mind is purify'd from the Dross of Earth, and disposed as it ought to God and heavenly Things will find that every Accident of Life contributes to his Advantage. For the true Reason of our Passion and Disquiet, when Things fall out contrary to our Expectations or Desires, is the want of that Resignation and Temper, which never fails to compose the Spirit of Men, mortify'd to themselves and the World, and disengaged from the Vanities and false Appearance of Happiness here below. Nothing so infects and defiles, so entangles and perplexes a Man's Mind, as a sordid Love of the Creatures. But when we can once prevail with ourselves to despise these trifling, these deluding Comforts without us, our Retirements into our own Breasts will be frequent,

and free ; our Joys resulting from them undisturbed ; and our Contemplations of Heaven and Heavenly Things full of Rapture and Transport.

C H A P. II.

The Advantage of Humility,

BE not extremely solicitous what Friends thou hast to appear in thy Behalf, nor what Foes employ their Malice in creating thee Difficulty and Trouble ; But let it be thy great Care to keep God thy Friend and Helper, and be sure to preserve a Good Conscience ; for, so long as thy own Heart condemns thee not, God will not fail to plead thy Cause, and assist and bless thy Righteous Undertakings. And those whom he receives into his peculiar Protection, no Wickedness or Spite shall be able to hurt. Suffer thou may'st indeed, but provided thou learn to suffer without Murmuring and Impatience, thou shalt certainly see the Salvation of God. And if this seem to tarry, yet wait for it ; for He best knows the proper Season of Deliverance, and therefore you ought entirely to rest upon his Wise Disposal. Deliver no doubt he will : The relieving Men in Distress, and wiping off the Shame and Reproach of his Servants, being Acts by which God delights to signalize his Providence. But there is often Reason, why the doing it should be deferred ; since the Discovery of our Failings by other People, and the Reproofs we meet with upon their Account, have frequently a very happy Effect upon our Minds, and render them more modest and humble in their own Esteem of themselves.

And Humility is a Virtue of so general, so exceeding good Influence, that we can scarce purchase it too dear

dear. For he, who is lowly in his own Eyes, and sensible of his own Failings, makes no difficulty to acknowledge his Offences against his Neighbour, and gives all reasonable Satisfaction to any who have cause to be angry at him. Nor does this Forwardness to Reconciliation expose him to the Insults of Injurious Men; for God charges his Providence with a peculiar Protection of the Humble, and delivers such as are of a contrite Spirit. He condescends to dwell with the Humble, and hath engaged to comfort their holy Sorrows. To these he promises large Portions of his Grace, and that, *they who abase themselves*

shall afterwards be exalted: To these he reveals his Secrets, and draws them to himself with the Cords of Love and Kindness. The Humble suffers no Disturbance of Mind, but receives the Reproaches and Affronts of Men without any great Impression. For he considers, that God, and not the World, is his Hope; and if his Favour be but secured, the rest cannot be of any very great Importance. In short, this Virtue is so necessary, so fundamental a one, that no Man ought to esteem himself a Proficient in Goodness, who is not yet arrived to that Pitch of it, which teaches him to think himself the least of all Saints, and last of all Men.

Luc. xiv.

Psal. xxv.

C H A P. III.

The Peace-macker.

Secure Peace at Home in the first Place; and, when thy own Breast is thus composed, it will then be proper to Reconcile and make Peace among thy Neighbours. And this indeed is a very worthy and reputable Action; it brings greater and juster Com-

mendation to a Man, and more Benefit to those with whom he converses, than Wit, or Learning, or any of those other so much admired Accomplishments. And as every thing is set off by its Contrary, so here, the Mischief of a contentious Disposition is unconceivable. For nothing can be so innocent, nothing so well or kindly meant, but such a Man will be sure to fix some ill Interpretation upon it : But the Good Temper will be as careful, on the other Hand, to take every thing in the best Sense it is capable of. For a peaceable Man is not apt to suspect Ill of any ; but the Peevish and Discontented are rack'd and tormented with a thousand jealous Whimsies, and neither are quiet themselves, nor content to let other People be so. They are very liberal in saying, what they should not ; and as backward in doing what they should. Diligent Observers of their Neighbour's Duty, and scandalously negligent of their own. Whereas, in truth, our Saviour's Rule should always be our Measure ; for no Man is fit to Censure or Correct his Brother, by pulling *the Mote out of his Eye*, till he have first exercised a due Severity upon himself, and be effectually reformed, by casting *the Beam out of his own Eye*. And oh ! how happy should we be, how eased of Detraction, and Calumny, and Censoriousness, if none would take upon them to Condemn or Censure others, till they were first qualified for the Authority they usurp, by a thorough Amendment of their own Manners, and being Proof against any just Reprehension themselves ?

Who can forbear the observing, how manifestly unequal we are in our Dealings ? Every one is ingenious at framing Excuses, and making large Allowances for what he doth himself ; and yet scarce any Body admits the Apologies alledged by others in their own Vindication. How much more just and reasonable were our Proceedings, would we but pass a favourable

ble Construction upon the Actions of others, and turn the Severity of our Censure upon our own? If you expect to be born with, you must first learn to bear with your Brethren, and exercise the Good Nature you expect, as oft as Occasion offers. For Men are best taught by Examples, and the Measure we mete gives us a Right to receive the same again. But is this Charity? Is this Humility? Nothing more distant from it. For these dispose us to condemn, and be angry with no body but ourselves. To keep up a good Understanding with Men of Goodness and Temper, is a but very vulgar Virtue. This is easy and delightful, for every Man naturally desires Quiet and good Usage, and cannot help being well affected to Persons who love, and please, and are like him. The Difficulty is, to carry Matters smooth and inoffensively with Men of rugged, intractable, and fierce Dispositions; with those who make little Conscience of what they do or say, and stick at nothing unjust or unfair in their Dealings. And he who can do this, is a truly great Soul, and sets a noble and commendable Patern of Philosophical, or which is more, of Christian Fortitude.

There are a sort of Men, who cherish Peace and Quiet, with themselves and all the World; and another very vile sort of Wretches, the very Reverse of these, who delight to fish in troubled Waters, and are neither easy, nor will suffer any body else to be so; eternally troublesome to others, but much more tormenting and vexatious to themselves. And there are yet a Third sort, who are not satisfy'd with giving no Offence, but make it their Business to reconcile others, where it hath been given; and to restore that Peace, which they were never instrumental in disturbing. But when all is done, our Life here is exposed to perpetual Misery and Contention; and the utmost Degree of Peace we must expect to arrive at, does not consist in being free from Injuries and Crosses.

but

but in bearing them with Humility, and not being provoked to Impatience, and uneasy Resentments, And therefore, the more any Man hath brought himself to suffer, and the better he entertains Afflictions and Wrongs, the more serene his Mind will be. For this Person hath gained a Conquest over himself, is above the Reach of Fortune, hath the World at his Command, is a Friend of Christ, and an Inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

C H A P. IV.

Purity and Sincerity.

There are two Wings by which a Man soars above the World, Sincerity and Purity. The former regards the Intention, the latter the Affections; That aspires and aims at a Likeness to God; This makes us really like him. We should find no Difficulty in any good Action, were but our Minds free from all intemperate Passion and Desire. And this Perfection of Freedom we should not fail to attain, did we, in all our Designs and Undertakings, propose no other Ends than Obedience to the Will of God, and promoting the Good of our Neighbour. Were but our Minds thus fixed, and our Intentions regulated, every thing would strangely contribute to our Edification. We should study the Volume of Natur with Profit, and every Line in that large Book would tend to our Instruction. The very smallest, and, in common Esteem, most despicable Creature would represent, as in a Glass, the Goodness of God to us. And the Reason why these things are seen with so useless Speculation, is, because our Minds are not rightly disposed, to draw those Profitable and Practical Inferences, which

which very naturally result from them. For, as Colours appear to our Minds as they are painted in the Eye, so the Judgment Men make of all outward Objects, depends upon the Condition of the Mind. And we argue and pronounce of them differently, as we happen to be differently affected before-hand.

If there be such a Thing as true Pleasure in this World, the Pure in Heart enjoy it. And if there be a Hell upon Earth, it dwells in that Man's Breast, who hath a guilty and polluted Conscience. As Iron is scoured from the Rust by Fire, and becomes bright and new ; so that Zeal by which we renounce the World, and turn entirely to God, takes off our Filth, and changes us into new Men. The lukewarm and indifferent Christian grudges every thing he does, boggles at every Difficulty, and seeks his Satisfaction in worldly and outward Comforts. But if he warmly apply himself to subdue his Passions, and resolutely attempt the following God in his own Way, the Hardships which at first discouraged him, grow familiar, and lessen upon his Hands. All that God appoints *Matth. xi. 29.* him to do or suffer, becomes sensibly to *32.* him an *easy Yoke and a light Burthen*, and *he finds Peace and Rest to his Soul.*

C H A P. V.

Know thy Self.

IT is a very usual thing with us, to have a mighty Confidence in ourselves ; when alas ! the want both of Abilities and Performance reproves our Vanity and Folly, For how small is the Proportion of our Gifts, in comparison of our own Imaginations concerning them ? And how defective our Wisdom and Care

to use and improve even that Proportion we have ? The Light that is in us shines but dimly, and by our Neglect we suffer it to go quite out. We are often blind and not sensible of our Infirmities ; We stumble and fall, and still pretend we see ; commit horrible Sins ; aggravate our Guilt by defending what we have done ; nay, are sometimes so wretchedly deluded, as even to sanctify our Wickedness by a Pretence of Zeal. The smallest Faults of others seldom escape our Censure ; and the much greater of our own as seldom fall under our Observation. The Burthens and Hardships we put upon them, seem reasonable, easy, and light ; but the least and most trivial Uneasiness they create to Us, we have a quick and painful Sense of, and cry out, *Who can bear it ?* Whereas, would we but take a right Estimate of ourselves, and judge our own Actions impartially, we should find little Leisure and less Provocation, to pronounce severely concerning our Brethren.

Now this is the wise and truly Spiritual Man's Method : He employs his Thoughts at home, considers that there lies his proper Business and Care ; and is tender of other People's Failings, from a due and humble Consciousness of his own. And whatever fond Opinions we may cherish of our own Virtue, Religious and Perfect we are not, nor ever can be, till we examine our own Consciences diligently, and leave all the rest of the World to stand and fall by the Judgment of their own Master. Censoriousness and Christian Piety can never dwell together. For this would work us to a neglect of all things without us, and make us both forbear and despise all Judging, but those of God and our own Conscience. The Mind, which does not converse with itself, is an idle Wanderer, and all the Learning in the World is fruitless and misemploy'd, whilst in the midst of his boasted Knowledge, a Man continues in profound Ignorance of that,
which

which in point both of Duty and Advantage he is most concerned to know. True Peace and Satisfaction of Mind can only be acquired by doing our own Business; and Friendship and Charity are best preserved, by leaving off all impertinent and busy Curiosity, concerning the Conduct and Reputation of our Neighbours.

The abandoning all worldly Care, is a true Argument of greater Proficiency in Goodness. For, by esteeming highly of any thing here below, our value for God and Heaven is unavoidably lessened and impaired. Let nothing therefore but God, and the things that be of God, seem great or grateful to thee, worthy desiring, or rejoicing in. And all that Imaginary Comfort, which the Creatures pretend to administer, treat with the generous Neglect and Contempt that it deserves. For a Soul entirely devoted to the Love of God, will naturally despise every thing in comparison of Him. And Reason good there is why it should do so, when we consider, that every thing else is frail and of short Continuance, empty and unsatisfactory; but God alone Eternal, Omnipresent, Infinite in every Excellence; and therefore he is the best, he the only Comfort and true Joy of the Soul, who alone can fill and exceed its largest Desires.

CHAP. VI.

The Joy of a good Conscience.

THE Glory and Priviledge of a good Man consists in the Testimony of his own Mind; For this is a perpetual Feast and Triumph. It sets him above the Power of Fortune, and makes the sharpest Afflictions not only an Exercise of his invincible Patience, but a
Matter

Matter of undisturbed Joy to him. Whereas even Prosperity itself cannot procure Ease and Content to a guilty and self-condemning Breast. Would'st thou then enjoy a sweet and uninterrupted Tranquility? Keep all at Peace within, and give thy own Thoughts no Cause to reproach thee. All the Satisfaction we take or promise ourselves, is vain and dangerous, except that only which proceeds from a Sense of having done our Duty. The Men thou seest so gay, so seemingly full of Delight, are galled and stung within; they have no inward, no true Contentment; and notwithstanding their most industrious Pursuits of Pleasure, that Sentence of God is irreversibile and the sad Effects of it hang over their Hearts, that

Isa. lvii. 21. *there is no Peace to the Wicked.* They may perhaps make mighty Boasts of their Enjoyments, put on an Air of Happiness, give out, that their Pomp and Greatness secures them from the Assaults of Misery; but these are all Delusions, and ought not to incline our Assent, or provoke our Envy. We see not their inward Tortures; nor are Witnesses of those Checks and Terrors, which make Retirement bitter and insupportable, and haunt their Closets and their Beds: We see not yet, but there is a Time coming when we shall see an angry God breaking out upon them in Fury; their mighty Projects quashed and baffled, and all the Happiness they vainly boasted of, vanish like a Dream.

While therefore these Men take a Pride in their Successes and outward Enjoyments, do Thou with equal Satisfaction entertain thy Afflictions. This is not indeed to Flesh and Blood an easy Undertaking; but to a Soul filled with Grace and Love, which knows and proposes to itself no other Happiness but God, nothing is impracticable, nothing difficult. For what is this, but to rejoice in the Fatherly Care and Affection of Him, whose Providence ordereth these Sufferings

ferings for thy Good ? The Glory which we give or receive from one another, is very fickle and perishing ; it cannot last long, and while it does, some Alloy of Sorrows will ever attend and damp it. The Good Man's Glory stands upon stronger Foundations ; it rises from within, and must endure so long as that Innocence which creates it : Nay, it must last as long as God himself ; for his Will carefully performed, his Favour and Approbation which follows that Performance, are the solid Bases on which it stands : And these can never fail, so long as Truth and Justice continue impregnable. To him who aspires after Eternal Glory and Honour, that of this World is of very little Consideration. And these are so very different, so inconsistent, that the Love and sincere Desires of the One are best proved by a Neglect and Disesteem of the Other. Nay, not only the future, but the present Happiness is best secured, by seeking the Approbation of God alone : For nothing contributes more to an easy and quiet Mind, than a Disregard of the Praise, and despising the Censures and Reproaches of Men.

A pure and quiet Conscience does above all things dispose a Man to rest contented with his Condition : And particularly, with regard to the Opinion of the World, it is highly reasonable he should do so. For what is any one really the better, or the worse, for what other People say of him ? Their Commendations add nothing to his Virtue, nor does their Dispraise and Scandal take one whit from it. The Man is still the same ; what his own Actions and the Judgment of God make him. This is the Standard of our Worth and Happiness ; neither more nor less belongs to us, than will be found to do so at the last great Account ; and that will depend, not upon what we were said or supposed to be, but upon what in very deed we were in this World. The more Respect therefore we bear to
the

the Condition of our own Minds, the less Impression will the Characters and Reports of Men make upon us. For God seeth not as Men see; they observe the Face and outward Appearance, but he searcheth and understands the Heart. They look upon the Action, and form a Judgment from thence: He sees our Intentions, and condemns or acquits us according to our Honesty and Sincerity or corrupt Inclinations and wicked Designs. And therefore a Modest Humble Man makes it his constant Care to be doing Good, and to think meanly of his own Performances. He seeks, nay, he feels no great Matter of Comfort, from any of the Advantages which attend Well-doing in this World; but considers whom he serves, and for whose sake he does it, and cheerfully relies upon *him* alone, for the Praise and Reward of that which best deserves it. And when we are not anxiously concerned for the Testimony and Credit of Men, then may we truly be said to have resigned ourselves to God, and to depend upon Him, with that stedfast and holy Confidence which becomes

us. *Not he that commendeth himself* (no; *2 Cor. x. 18.* *nor he whom others commend neither*) *is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.* And therefore a Holy and Spiritual Man indeed lays aside, as much as may be, all Concern with the World. He considers that God is the only Person whom he should labour to please; and while he is happy in his Approbation, and the Witness of a good Conscience, all outward Accidents are considered, as Things remote, and foreign to his main Design; and such as ought not much to affect him.

C H A P. VII.

Of Loving Jesus above all Things.

Blessed is that Man indeed, who feels and relishes the Love of Jesus ; who finds the sweet of this Love, and can even despise and hate himself for his Saviour's sake. For, tho' the Love of ourselves be the very Voice of Reason and Nature, yet the same Voice commands us too, to quit a less valuable Friend for a better. And this Exchange he hath made necessary to our Obedience, who requires us, to love him only, above all Things. And He alone is worthy of our Love. For the Objects of this World, which are too apt to engage our Affections, are uncertain and deceitful ; but Christ is Faithful and Eternal, and will not fail to return and reward our Love. He that depends upon any Temporal Comfort, will one Day be convinc'd of its Frailty to his Cost, when He and it both perish together ; but Jesus remaineth for ever. And as he cannot perish himself, so neither will he suffer any to perish, who depend upon *him*. Let *him* then be your Hope, your Joy, your Love, whose Friendship and whose Power are everlasting. Tho' all Things forsake you, yet will not He ; nay, all Things else will certainly forsake you, but even then He will be All, and more than all the World to you.

Living and dying then, keep close and steadfast to Him, for he in Life and Death will be to you Advantage. But then his Friendship and constant Protection depends upon this Condition, That you admit no Rival into Competition with him. He will not accept divided Affections, but expects to reign supreme and sole Lord of your Hearts ; and the only way of inviting him thither, is to cast out all other Inmates, and let him have the whole House to himself. And indeed, when

we come to consider and compute Matters justly, whatever Love or Regard we have allowed to any thing but him, will be found in a Manner perfectly lost and thrown away. Do not therefore indulge a Passion, which can turn to no Account. Lean not upon a broken Reed, which will not only let thee fall, but pierce thy Arm too. And such a Reed is mortal

1 Pet. i. 24. Man, *For all Flesh is Grass, and all the Glory thereof flourisheth as a Flower of the*

Field : The Grass withereth, and the Flower fadeth ; And they who are enamour'd with its Beauty, find how poor and transitory, how empty and deceitful a Good they set their Hearts upon. Where-ever else we expect Comfort, our Hopes are soon blasted, or wretchedly disappointed : But when our Thoughts and Wishes center in Jesus, we are sure to find what we look for, sure to obtain all that we did, more than we could, expect. Think not to find satisfaction in thyself : for the better you understand yourself, the less Cause you will find to love yourself ; and the more you indulge this Love, the greater and more certain will be your Ruin. Seek then thy Lord and only Saviour ; for he who hath Christ, possesses all Things : And he who neglects him, does himself more Mischief than all the Enemies, nay, all this World, and all the Powers of Hell, could ever bring upon him.

C H A P. VIII.

*Of Intimate Conversation, and Friendship with
J E S U S.*

WHILE Jesus is present by his Grace and Comfort, nothing is hard to do, nothing grievous to suffer; but Happiness and perfect Peace dwell and reign in my Breast. But the Moment he withdraws his cheering Presence, all my Supports are lost and gone, all my faculties disabled, and every Difficulty insuperable, every Cross insupportable: The Consolations of this World make no Impression; nor give any solid Joy, while he continues silent; but let *him* speak one single Word of Comfort to the Soul; and she is gay in the midst of Distresses. Thus *Mary* rose immediately, and dried up her Tears, upon *John xi.* the News of his Approach, and the first Call of her dear Master. And happy sure was she, happy is every Mortal in this Vale of Tears, whom Jesus calls. For whom he calls and commands to come to him, he calls from Grief and Mourning to true Joy. How flat and insipid, how harsh and unpleasant is all we are, and all we have, without this Heavenly Comforter? How empty and deluding all those Wishes and Desires, which are placed upon any other Object? They bid us infinitely to our Loss. A Loss greater and more irretrievable, than if we lost the whole World: For could we gain the whole World with the Loss of him, it were a foolish and most miserable Exchange. And what indeed is all the World without him? To be deprived of this one Friend, is bitterer than Death: To enjoy and possess him, the only Happiness of Life. His Friendship is Security sufficient against a whole World of Enemies: A Treasure above all the Riches of the Universe. He who finds this, hath more than both
the

the *Indies* ; and he who loses it, loses more than can be expressed. But why do I say more? He loses all. For this is Poverty indeed, this is the only Poverty, to lose the only true Riches.

So all-sufficient, so delightful, so heavenly sweet, is the Friendship and Company of Jesus. But every Man is not qualified for so precious a Blessing, for it requires great Care and Skill, and Wisdom, to be fit for this Enjoyment. Humility and Charity must make and keep him ours. Piety and Peace are the Dispositions he delights in. Sin, and Passion, and worldly Affections will drive him away. And if he take his Flight, where, wretched Man, where wilt thou find a Friend? Without a Friend thou canst not live in Comfort; and if he be not thy only Friend, thou art left desolate and forlorn. Consider then, how miserable thou makest thyself, by placing thy Confidence, or thy Joy, in any other. For better were it far, that the whole World should bend their utmost Spite against thee, than this one Friend be provoked to Displeasure. If therefore Relations and Acquaintance be dear, yet let none be so, comparably to thy God and Saviour. Remember, they are dear for *his* Sake, but he for his own. For this is the peculiar Prerogative of Christ, that Enemies as well as Friends should challenge a share in thy Affections upon his Account. Thou art to forgive and love, to pity and pray for all Mankind, because *he* loves them all; and it ought to be the earnest Desire of our Hearts, that all may know, and be sensible of his Love, and make some suitable Returns for such wonderful Goodness. But neither we nor any other Person have a Right to be loved for our own selves; for the Foundation of Love is Excellence and Goodness; and this is all from God. In him alone it dwells originally, inherently, independently; and what Proportion soever any Creature hath, is entirely derived from him, the Emanation of that universal and inexhaustible

haustible Source. And therefore he alone hath right to command our Love for his own Excellence, because all Excellence is his ; He alone is to be loved above all others, because he neither hath, nor can have any Equal. Covet not then the Praise or Love of Man, for Praise and Love are God's Peculiar. Nor lavishly dispense these to others, but in thyself, and all Persons of Virtue and Merit, laud, and admire, and love the Graces of Christ.

Bring to thy Lord a clean and upright Spirit, free from the sordid Affections of the World ; that thou may'st be entirely his, and solace thyself with the Delights of his Conversation. But leave the World, and come to him, thou canst not, without the Prevention and Assistance of his Grace. This only can exalt thy Desires, and draw and charm thy Heart with the Cords of divine Love, For Man can *do all things through Christ that strengthens him*; but if that Succour be withdrawn, he is blind and naked, destitute and weak, full of Confusion and Torment ; or rather, he is Confusion in the Abstract, Weakness and Impotence itself. And if sometime thou feel an inward Scourge, let not thy melancholy Thoughts deject or drive thee to Despair. For Spiritual Comforts and Joys are sown in Tears ; and Patience brings forth plentiful and perfect Fruits of Righteousness and Peace. If these Sorrows proceed from a Reflection upon thy own Sins and Infirmities, indulge the holy Grief ; and lament, as becomes a serious Penitent, thy own Unworthiness, and former Misery. If Adversities sent from the Hand of God afflict thee, support thyself with the Consolations of a good Conscience ; and be assured, that suffering so as may advance thy Master's Honour, will end in Glory and Advantage to thyself. But consider, that, in either Case, the Trouble cannot be long ; for these black Intervals of Sadness will as certainly, as naturally, be followed with

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Inward Peace and Joy, as Summer succeeds Winter, and Storms are hushed into a profound Calm.

C H A P. IX.

The Disconsolate State.

WHen all human Comforts forsake us, if God vouchsafe to supply their Place with Spiritual and Heavenly, which are infinitely better; we are not much to wonder, if the Soul preserve its Temper, and bear up manfully under such Circumstances. But when the World and God both frown, then to bear such Desertion with Patience, and be content to be abandoned of all our Hopes for his Glory; then to acknowledge our Unworthiness, and not charge God foolishly, nor be partial to our suffering selves; this is Virtue and Resignation indeed, the very Excellence and Perfection of an humble and submissive Mind. Who that considers, can forbear rejoicing, while the chearful Light of God's Countenance shines bright about him? What Wretch is so unreasonable to grudge his Service, when Bounty and Blessings reward his Pains, and convince him that he does not serve God for nought? This is the happy Season, which every Man desires and triumphs in. Smooth and pleasant is his Passage, whom the Grace of God conducts and carries thro' this troublesome World. For how can we think it strange, that he should not feel the Weight of his Burhen, who is strengthened and supported by Almighty Power, and led thro' Difficulties and Dangers by the Captain of his Salvation?

It is natural for us to cling fast about any thing that may give us Ease; and hard for a Man to divest himself of carnal Affections; so that, before our Passions

sions be effectually subdued, and our Delight and Hope fixed entirely upon God, many and frequent Conflicts must be undergone. And yet at no expence less than this, is our Peace and Quiet to be purchased. For so long, as a Man rests upon his own Strength, he is easily diverted to worldly Comforts, and tastes little Satisfaction but what arises from such. But he whose Soul is enamoured with God and Goodness, expects not his Delight from sensual Enjoyments, but finds a Pleasure in the severer Exercises of Virtue and Devotion, and even enjoys the Difficulties he undergoes for Christ's Sake.

If then God shed down Spiritual Comforts from Above, entertain the precious Gifts with Humility and Thanks; and lose not the Effect and Reward of Grace, by supposing it your Due, or valuing yourself upon it. Rejoice in the Blessing; but temper that Joy with Gratitude. Let it not swell to Insolence and Vanity, to Censoriousness, or Contempt of thy weaker Brethren; but the more thou hast received, the greater let thy Modesty be; and the more thy Fear, thy Diligence and Watchfulness, that thou abuse not such gracious Liberality. For Comfort and Gladness will not last always; a Cloud will come betwixt, and interrupt the chearful Beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Temptations will have their turn too; and therefore, when these fall hard and heavy, let Patience and Humility, not hopeless Despondency, be the Effect of such Oppressions. The Greatness of thy Sufferings must inflame thy Trust, thy Zeal, thy Devotion; and fervent Prayer is the proper Weapon against the Attacks of our Spiritual Adversary. For Matters are not desperate, He who took away his Supports, only withdraws them for a Season, and to those who seek them with holy Perseverance, will at a fit (that is, at his own) Time, restore them again with Advantage. This is an usual thing with God. The Prophets and

100 *Of the Imitation* BOOK II

Saints of old have all advanced to their Crowns, by the same rough Way of Grief and Desertion. Nor may we suppose, that these Disconsolate Intervals are the Effects of God's Anger and final Abdication of us.

Observe how eminent an Instance of these Changes we have in *the Man after God's own Heart*. When the Grace and Favour of God was lifted up upon him, his

Psf. xxx. 6. Mind was exalted proportionably : *In my Prosperity, I said, I shall never be cast down, thou, Lord, of thy Goodness, hast made my Hill so strong.*

When this Favour was withdrawn, he confesses the Consequence of it, the deep and heavy Impression it made upon his Spirits, *Thou didst turn thy Face from me, and I was troubled.* But yet this

Trouble, sharp and sensible as it was, did not sink down into Despair. His Remedy was Prayer,

8. *Then cried I unto thee O Lord, and got me to my Lord right humbly.* And how successful this Application proved, himself declares, *The Lord heard me, and had Mercy upon me ; thou hast turned*

10. 11. *my Mourning into Dancing, thou hast put off my Sackcloth and girded me with Gladness.* Now, if these Sorrows were the Portion of those bright Patterns of Piety ; if God's dearly beloved Children and faithfullest Servants, have not lived constantly under his propitious Smiles ; If Men of so exalted Virtue were yet differently affected , as they felt different Dispensations of Providence toward them ; what are we poor, we weak, desertless Wretches, that we should expect to be exempted from Troubles ? What is Our Zeal in comparison of Theirs, that we should hope to have it always warm, always gay ? What have we done to confine the kindly Influences of that Spirit, and secure them constant to ourselves, which even to those that use *John iii. 8.* and improve it best, *goes and comes, and blows only where and when it listeth ?* And therefore *Job* takes

takes notice of it, as a Fate common to all Mankind, that God does not so magnify, or set his Heart upon any one among them, but that *Job vii. 17. 18*
he visits him every Morning, and tries him every Moment.

Where therefore can we safely place our Confidence, except in the Grace and Mercy of God only? All others Comforters are miserable. The Company and Exhortation of Religious Men, The tender and affectionate Advice of Dear and Faithful Friends, The Entertainment of good Books, The moving Strains of pious Eloquence, The heavenly Raptures of Psalms and Hymns, All these Administer but very poor and slender Relief, to assuage the Anguish of our Mind, or but so much as to divert and deceive our Pain; if God withdraw his Consolations, and leave us to the desolate Condition of merely Human Helps. Then, as our last and best Refuge, we must fly to God; humble ourselves under his mighty Hand; submit to what he lays upon us; acknowledge his Goodness even in our Sufferings; and be content to suffer still, so long as he sees fit; for he will not see fit to continue his Displeasure for ever, but will revive the Contrite, and exalt the Humble in due time.

I never yet, to the best of my Remembrance, met with any remarkably Good Man, who had not, at some time or other, fallen into these Discomforts; and languished under the Apprehension of God's Displeasure, or the Abatement of his own Zeal. Nor was it ever designed, that any Man in this Life should arrive at so exalted a State of Holiness, and absolute Safety, as not to be sometimes tempted. Though this happens at very different times: For some have their Trials in the beginning of their Conversion, which are reserved for Others to their latter and more perfect Days. It seems, the sublime and rapturous Contemplations of God, are a Blessing too precious for those, who have not first endured some Trouble of Mind, to qualify

them for so excellent a Reward. Well then may we Rejoice in these Temptations, which are ordained certain Forerunners of more abundant Grace, and Signs of those unspeakable Consolations and Delights, which are reserved for them that have approved themselves Faithfull. For not him that is excused from Fighting, but *to him that overcometh by striving courageously, and endureth to the end, will I give to eat of the Tree of Life.* *Rev. ii. 7.*

Most wisely therefore are these Vicissitudes of Prosperity and Adversity appointed for the Improvement of our Piety and Virtue. Were our Troubles without Intermission, no Flesh could be saved; and therefore God softens and rewards them with inward and heavenly Comforts, that, so, assisted by his Grace, and encouraged by his Favour, we may be able to bear up against our sharpest Trials. But, were that Grace and Favour constant too, we should be immoderately exalted with our Performances, and impute the Blessings of God to our own Merit. And therefore the Returns of Affliction, and Spiritual Desertion, are convenient, to prevent or check our Pride. They shew us, that how greatly soever we may value ourselves, yet we are not so perfect, but that we deserve to suffer; and the Good we receive, we receive not of Debt, but of Liberality and free Grace. Mistake not, Man, the Devil never sleeps. He always watches for an Opportunity to assault, and work thee Mischief. The Flesh is not utterly dead, nor its Appetites and Passions so totally extinct, but that every fresh Object will awaken them into Lust. Be Thou therefore awake too, and prepare every Day for some new Conflict: Speak not Peace to thyself, when beset on every side with numerous and restless Enemies; for wretched is thy Case, if their Violence be suffered to bear thee down, or their subtle and wakeful Malice surprize thee into Sin.

C H A P. X.

Thankfulness for God's Mercies.

MAN is born to Trouble as the Sparks fly upward; and dost thou refuse the Condition of Nature, by hoping to be exempted from Labour and Suffering? Consider this, and apply thyself vigorously to Patience, as a most necessary Virtue; and learn to bear the Cross, as the Business thou art created for. For this will much better become a sinful Creature, than to depend upon Comforts, which thou deservest not, and Pleasures which belong not to thee. Could even the Worldly-Minded be secure of Spiritual Joys without Interruption, he could not, in agreement with his own Principle, but be passionately fond of them, as yielding more substantial Satisfaction, than all External and sensual Delight. For what Comparison can there be between those Pleasures, which are attended with Shame, or Deceit; and those which are solid and durable, void of Reproach and Indecency, the Fruits of Virtue, and the special Gift of God to chaste and heavenly Souls? This then where *Epicurism* indeed, were this to be attained and preserved by any the most assiduous Care of ours. But that which renders even these Joys less sensible, and less eagerly desired, is, that they are the Free Gift of God, who both dispenses and withdraws them as himself sees fit, and frequently suspends the Happiness they bring, by strong and severe Trials. For we are in a State of continual Discipline and Warfare, and our Conflicts must return very thick upon us, so long as we remain in such a State.

Nor are these Difficulties from the Malice of our Enemies only, but we ourselves contribute to our own Misery, and obstruct the more liberal Communi-

cations of Divine Grace and Comfort, by affecting a mistaken Freedom, and extravagant Conceits of our own Strength and Goodness. The Bounty of God is admirable, who supports us with the inward Satisfaction of his Spirit; but the Folly of Man is prodigious, who does not discern, and thankfully acknowledge, that all his Ability to do well is imparted by a higher Hand. If then the Gifts of Heaven are distributed to us more sparingly than we wish or expect, we lessen their Proportions, by not being duly qualified to receive them: And qualify'd we cannot be, while ingrateful to the Author, and negligent to improve all we receive to the Giver's Praise and Honour. For he who hath and useth Grace aright, does by that very Act incline God to give more. And from the Proud unthankful Neglecters of the Favour, even what they had is taken away, and added to the Portion of the Humble and Diligent; those who are duly sensible, from whom, and to what Purposes, they have it.

Might I be allowed to chuse my own Lot, I should think it much more eligible to want my Spiritual Comforts, then to abound in these at the Expence of my Humility, No, let a Penitent and Contrite Spirit always be my Portion, and may I ever so be the Favourite of Heaven, as never to forget that I am Chief of Sinners. Knowledge in the Sublime and Glorious Mysteries of the Christian Faith, and Ravishing Contemplations of God and a Future State, are most desirable Advantages; but still I prefer *Charity* *1 Cor. viii. 1.* *which edifieth*, before the highest intellectual Perfections of that *Knowledge which puffeth up*. For every thing which is high, is not therefore holy. Many Meats are agreeable to the Palate, which are not conducive to Health; and those Gifts, which are first in our Esteem, do not always recommend us most to God. Those Spiritual Advantages are certainly best for us, which increase our Modesty,
and

and awaken our Caution, and dispose us, to suspect, and to deny ourselves. And therefore it is an Argument of Wisdom in God, to recal his Gifts sometimes; as well as of his Goodness to impart them at others; that by the Loss of what we had, we may experimentally find our own Impotence; confess and feel our Wants; and know to whom the whole Glory of all that is excellent in us, does of right belong. Deal justly then in this Matter: *Render to God the things that are God's*, and take to thyself what is properly thy own: To him, the Thanks for his Grace, nay, for the very Power of using them aright; To thyself, the Shame and Condemnation of having used them no better: And know, that His is the Honour for all thou hast done well, Thine only the Blame and just Punishment for all thou hast done amiss.

Sit down in the lowest Place, and then shalt thou with Honour be promoted to the highest; *Luke xiv.* for the loftier the Building, the deeper must the Foundation be laid. The highest in God's Esteem are meanest in their own; and their Excellence consists in the Meekness and Truth, not in the Pomp and Ostentation of Piety, which affects to be seen and admir'd of Men. The reposing our Hop and Trust in God alone is the most effectual Prevention of Vanity and Insolence; and ascribing to him all our Virtues and Attainments, is inconsistent with coveting the Praise of Men. For such Persons are concerned to approve their Actions to God only; and labour to advance his Glory, as the chief and only thing, which ought to be magnified in all that is pious and commendable, in themselves and every Good Man.

Receive then a little with due Sense of Gratitude, thus thou shalt obtain more. The Gifts, which others esteem meanest and most contemptible, consider as the Gifts of God, and let this raise their Value in thy Esteem. For indeed every thing ought to be esteemed,
which

which is a Mark of his Favour, who is the supreme Lord of all. Even Stripes and Punishments from *his* Hands should be, not only submitted to with Patience, but received with humble Thanks : since his Rod is intended for our Good, and no Dispensation of his Providence is without its profitable and wise Design. If then thou value the Grace of God, and desire to keep it, be thankfull when he gives ; be resigned and patient when he takes away ; pray fervently and frequently for the Returns of his Favour, and let not thy own Pride or Carelessness provoke him to withdraw it.

C H A P. XI.

Of Loving Christ in Affliction.

MANY we find possess'd with strong Desires of Christ's Heavenly Kingdom, and eager of reigning with him there ; but few, who are in love with his Cross, and content to suffer with him upon Earth. The Grace and sweet Consolations of his Spirit charm and draw us, but Afflictions drive us away from him. When he invites Men to sit down at his Table, the Guests come crowding in apace : but if he call us after him into the Wilderness, to Fast and Pray with him, he calls in vain, and goes alone. The Breaking of Bread is what all of us like, but the Drinking of his Bitter Cup we are shamefully averse to. We read the History of his Life, and peruse his Miracles with Reverence and Delight, for these were full of Mercy and Relief to wretched Men ; but when he comes to the Tragical Circumstances of his dolorous Passion, and bitter Death, we either shut our Books, or read the melancholy Story with Coldness and Indifference. Very
hardly

hardly persuading ourselves, that in *this* part he hath left us an Example, that we *1 Pet. ii. 21.* should follow his Steps. Such was the Behaviour, not of the Multitudes only, but of his own Disciples too heretofore, who throng'd into his Hosanna's and his Preaching; but when he was apprehended, and treated as a Malefactor, all *forsook him and fled.* And such is the Behaviour of all those Christians still, who serve him Chearfully, while Things go well with them, and magnify his Mercy, so long as they taste his Goodness; but draw back, when Afflictions approach, and if he hide the Brightness of his Face, fall into wretched Dejections and Despondency of Mind, and are provoked to Impatience and Murmuring, and sad Complaints.

Methinks we might find Charms and Engagements, many and powerful, which should unite our Souls and Affections to the Blessed *Jesus*, from what he is in Himself, not from what he is to Us; without any Respect of our own privat Interest, and the present Advantages we receive from him. This would confirm and root us fast in Love, and Praise, and Gratitude; beyond the Power of outward Calamities, or inward Anxieties of Mind, to shake and divert us. Then should we, with those Holy Men, even think it good and thank God that we have been in Trouble, and though he *should slay us*, yet should we still delight and *trust in him.*

O! Could we once but get above this mercenary Disposition of proposing Interest and Gain in all we do, and love our Blessed Lord for his own sake how noble would be the Fruits of so generous a Principle? And indeed, how can we pretend to love him, when we only love ourselves; and pay Obedience to his Commands not out of Regard to *his* Authority and *our* Obligations, nor from a Desire to please him, but purely to promote our own Advantage? For where, among the

the many Millions who profess to be Zealous Christians, where is the Man that would be content to serve God, as his Maker and rightful Lord, had he no Expectation of Reward from him? Nay, who almost is so spiritual, so refined, as that Poverty of Spirit recommended and blessed by our Saviour, requires we should be, that is, Resign'd as to all Temporal Enjoyments, and well satisfied to persevere in our Duty, and not to think our Master hard, tho' he should even strip us bare of all those Comforts, which are usually the Encouragements of Piety and Virtue? This is a Temper rarely to be met with; such a Generosity and Greatness of Spirit, as Crowns and Kingdoms, nay, the whole Eastern World, were wisely given in Exchange for. For this is the Perfection of Love; a Virtue so exalted, that no other Part of Religion is to be named with it. A Man may bestow all his Wealth upon the Poor, and be never the better. He may chastise and mortify his Flesh and sensual Appetite, with all the Severities of the most exemplary Penitence, and yet this is but a low and little Excellence in comparison. He may attain to the highest and clearest knowledge in the Mysteries of Religion, but still he is infinitely short. His Virtues may be bright and exemplary, his Devotion fervent and constant, his Meditations ravishing and divine: All these are valuable Gifts; but there is still one Excellence behind, more valuable, more necessary than all the rest; and that is, being able, after having renounced all the World besides, to renounce himself for the sake of his Lord; to devote all he is or can do, so entirely to his Service, as to be content with every thing; to study his Will, his Pleasure, his Glory in all things, and to consult his own in nothing: And when he hath faithfully and diligently perform'd all, which he knew it became, and was expected from him to do, to esteem all this of no consideration, and account that he hath done nothing.

Others, no doubt, will have quite different Notions of him. They will see and admire, publish and extol his Virtues, but still their Commendations, tho' never so profuse, never so just, will not have any influence upon his Judgment; nor tempt him to swerve one whit from that Opinion, which Truth itself hath directed us to in this Case, *When ye have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable Servants.* He will not think that Complaint of the Prophet beneath him, *I am poor and desolate*; when yet in truth among mortal Men none is more wealthy, none more happy, none greater and more powerful than he, who in a true Christian Humility, thinks himself most helpless, most infirm, most miserable. In a word, none more honourable in God's Eyes, than he who is vilest and most despicable in his own.

Luke xvii.

Psalms xxv.

C H A P. XII.

The Reasonableness of taking up our Cross.

WHen Jesus thus describes the Condition of our being owned for his, *If any Man will be my Disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me*; the Generality of Men are apt to cry out with those in the Gospel upon another Occasion, *This is a hard Saying, and who can bear it?* But oh! that such would seriously consider, how infinitely more terrible and confounding that Sentence will be, which their angry Judge shall pronounce in Thunder at the last Day; and how those Ears, which are too soft and tender to bear This, will then be able to endure, a *Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the*

Matth xvi.

John. vi.

Matth xxv.

Devil

Devil and his Angels. Ah! how absurd, how senseless is it, not to harden ourselves at present, and chearfully embrace a Command, which, tho' attended with some short Uneasiness now, should yet be welcome to us, because it will give us Boldness in the great Day of Trial; and by imposing some short and very tolerable Pains, be our Security against Torments insupportable and eternal? For when our Lord shall come to judge the World with terrible Pomp, the Cross shall be displayed and lifted high in Heaven. This thing now, so much abhorred, so full of Shame, shall then be a Banner of Triumph; and they who have fought under it here, and followed the crucified Captain of their Salvation, in a Life of Humility and Sufferings, shall flock to it as their proper Standard, and enter with their glorious Leader into his Joy and Kingdom.

Why should we then boggle at that Cross, which leads directly to a Crown? Why thus obstruct our Happiness, by refusing that which heals our spiritual Infirmities, guards us against our worst Enemies, fills us with heavenly Comforts, brightens our Virtues, and supports us with assured Hopes of unconceivable and everlasting Bliss? Remember thy great Master and Example, bearing his Cross, dying upon his Cross, that thou hereafter mightest not disdain to bear it for thine own Advantage, when he for thy sake hath born it before thee. *For if we die with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him; but if we deny him, and are ashamed of this Punishment, he will also deny and be ashamed of us, and shut us out of his Glory.*

Consider that thy all depends upon Suffering and Dying. This is the Sum of thy Duty, this the Source of thy Happiness. God hath ordained no other way of bringing us to himself except that one of dying daily; and crucifying the Flesh with
Gal. v. 24. its

its Affections and Lusts. In this all the Dispensations of Providence conspire; For, what Course soever you take, which way soever you turn, how prudently soever you contrive, the Cross is sure to meet you every where. And that which, willingly embraced, would prove your Safety and Virtue, is sure to be your Portion, whether you will or not. Bodily Sickness and Pain, Disappointments and Losses in your Fortunes, Anguish and Perplexity of Heart, Discomfort and Desertions from God, Injuries and Provocations from Men, and which is worse than all, Displeasure and Discontent at yourself; One or more of these will be perpetually exercising your Patience; and so long as God sees fit to continue you in this State of Mortality and Discipline, 'tis vain to hope you shall be exempted from them.

For God, in his great Wisdom and Goodness, appoints us to Tribulation; and damps, or withdraws our present Comforts, that we may learn to love and value Him and Heaven the more, to acknowledge our Dependence upon his Bounty, be made sensible of our own Impotence, and grow wiser and more humble by Afflictions. By these we are taught to understand and value the sufferings of Christ, of which we should have but a very cold and imperfect Idea, did not our own Experience teach us what it is to suffer. And the greater Conformity to his Image our Trials work us up to, the clearer and more affecting Sense we have of his infinite Condescension. Avoid the Cross then we cannot, because we cannot run away from ourselves, nor cease to be Men; and therefore what we cannot avoid, we must make it our Endeavour patiently to endure and render that which would otherwise be our Torment, an Instrument of Virtue here, and of Glory hereafter.

Now this is still in your own Power. For They who sustain their Cross, shall likewise be sustained by

it in return, and all their Pains largely rewarded in their proper Time and Place. But this Life is not that Time and Place; and therefore we must be content to labour now, and expect our Recompence hereafter. But if we bear with Murmuring and Grudging, what bear we must; we do but gall our Shoulders with the Yoke, and render that a heavy unprofitable Load, which might be fruitful and glorious. If we cast off one Burthen, we are immediately pursued and oppressed by another; and instead of Affliction, full of Hope and Humility, draw upon ourselves that most intolerable of all Burthens, Guilt and Despair.

Why should you entertain an Imagination so vain, as that of being made an Exception to all Mankind? Produce me, if you can, one single Instance in the whole Catalogue of glorified Saints, who passed this Vale of Tears without his Portion of Misery. Even Jesus Christ himself, our great Lord, tho' God as well as Man, yet lived a Life of Trouble, and none was ever so truly a

Isaiab llii. Man of Sorrows, or so intimately acquainted with Grief. Himself hath told us, That Luke xxiv. it behoved him thus to suffer, and to rise again the third Day, and so to enter into his Glory.

And if this was the Way necessary for Christ himself to ascend to the Throne of God by, we must not presume to hope for a smooth and easy Passage thither. His whole Life was little else but one continued Cross, a Chain of Sufferings drawn out to the length of so many years. And do We, who profess to tread in his Steps, expect a Life of Softness and Ease, and Pleasure? No, no, fond Man, expect nothing but Trouble. This thou may'st depend upon, for it will never disappoint thee. It is not only the Condition of thy Happiness as a Man. For Mortality is beset on every side with Crosses, and exposed to suffering every Moment. And though these be both the Punishment and the Remedy for

for Sin, yet may we not imagine that they, who are most careful to preserve themselves from Sinning, are in the same proportion excused from Suffering. For frequently the best Men undergo the severest Trials; and the better they are, the tenderer and more painful Sense they have of them. For the fervent Love and Desire of a better Country, their proper and eternal Home, renders the present Pilgrimage and Banishment more tiresome and afflicting.

But yet these Calamities are no just Reflection upon the Wisdom and Goodness of Almighty God; for as he appoints the Rod in his Mercy, so does he likewise furnish his Servants with mighty Consolations and Supports, suitable to their Circumstances. And they, who submit to the Cross as becomes them, reap large and glorious Fruits by sowing in Tears. The Burthen of their Miseries is lightened, by casting their Care, and reposing their Trust, upon one who hath a tender Care for them. And the more the outward Man is weakened and oppressed, the greater Strength and Grace they feel in the inner Man. Nay such is their Desire, such the Satisfaction of being conformed to the Image of Christ; that good Men oftentimes would not so much as wish to be freed from those Miseries, in which the less discerning part of the World are apt to think the very Extremity of Unhappiness to consist. For these better instructed Souls have a farther Prospect, and can soften all their Distresses by this Consideration; that the more they endure, the purer and more refined they are from Sin, and the more acceptable and dear they become to God. It is true, this Consideration is not the Effect of any Strength or Wisdom merely human, but the Product of divine Grace. This sometimes gains so absolut a Conquest over natural Inclinations, and exalts Flesh and Sense to so high a degree of Resignation and Perfection, that what, as Men we cannot but decline, and have vio-

lent Aversions to, as Christians we contentedly embrace, and are entirely satisfied with,

When therefore we feel in our Selves, or observe in others, a Zeal so powerful, so noble, as not only to bear, but even to love and Delight in the Cross; When we vanquish and bring into absolute Subjection these Bodies, and their Appetites, by a long painful Course of rigorous, and voluntary Severities; When we industriously avoid Honours and Wealth, bear Injuries and Infamy contentedly, despise ourselves, and even delight to be despised by others; When we entertain the sharpest Misfortunes with Constancy and Temper, and are so perfectly dead to the World, as no longer so much as to desire those Enjoyments and Advantages, which recommend and sweeten Life to Mankind; do not suppose that this is the Work, or falls within the Compass of Man: For they who depend upon their natural Powers, or their own most exquisite Philosophy, can never rise so high, nor thus abstract their Minds from Matter and Sense. No Principle, but that of holy Trust and Faith in God, is capable of such divine Operations. This Strength and Resolution comes from Heaven. No Force less than Almighty can beat down the Flesh, the World, and the Devil under our Feet; None defeat and set us above the Horrors and Assaults of his Malice and Temptations; less than His, who vanquish'd this old Serpent upon the Cross, and by so doing, sanctified our Cross to us too,

Call up then all thy Powers of Reason and Religion: Remember whom thou hast engaged to follow, and with all the resolute Fidelity due to thy Vows and Obedience, set thyself manfully to take up his Cross, who submitted to die upon a Cross for thy Salvation. Prepare and dispose thy Heart, that no Affliction may overbear thee by surprize; but, considering what infinite Variety of Troubles hem thee in, and wait thee every

every where, let none have the Advantage of finding thee unprovided: Were there a Possibility of escaping, we might then be allowed to contrive Methods of declining our Miseries; but since they cannot be shifted off, the only Remedy we have left against them, is readiness to suffer. Consider it is thy Lord's Cup, and that he drank the very bitterest Dregs of it; consider it is he who gives it; and that he therefore gives it, that thou may'st be Partaker of his Sufferings, in order to be made a more worthy Partaker of his Glories.

'Tis true, he was strengthen'd in his Agonies by an Angel, sent from above, nor shalt thou want Supports proper for thy Condition. But what these are, or in what Measures fit to be imparted, our Lord himself knows best; and to his wise Disposal we must leave it. But all we have to do ourselves, is to secure an humble and patient Disposition. And this we should find less Difficulty in, would we but follow the Pattern our Jesus hath left, of *enduring the Cross, and despising the Shame, for the Glory set before him.* And what can re-

Luke xxii.

Heb. xii.

commend our Suffering, what confirm our Patience more, than to consider, that *these light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory?* That Glory, in comparison of which they are not worthy so much as to be nam'd. A Glory so exceeding, that if all the Tribulations incident to all Mankind were heaped upon one single Person; yet even so the Recompence is infinitely above what such a Suffering could pretend to deserve; and Heaven would be cheap and wisely bought, even at this vast Expence.

1 Cor. iv.

Esteem thyself then happy indeed, when thou canst even enjoy thy Sorrows, and find a sensible Satisfaction in suffering for Christ; for this is in a Manner to attain Heaven upon Earth. A Happiness, which no Man can ever arrive at, so long as Adversities bring

Pain, and Discontent, and sad Oppressions of Spirit; for the Solitude, and constant Labour to avoid Calamities, will be sure to produce perpetual Disquiet.

Suffering and Dying are not only necessary Incumbrances upon us, but the best and most authentick Instances of our Virtue and Obedience. It is the Business and Perfection of a Christian to do thus daily; and they, who in good earnest apply themselves to it, will quickly find their Affections raised, their Strength increased, their Comfort and inward Peace wonderfully advanced. St. *Paul* was wrapt up into the

2 Cor. xii.

third Heaven, yet did not he boast so much of this as of his Afflictions. And wherein the uncommon Privileges of this especial Favourite consisted, we learn from the Mouth of Christ himself, when he says, *Asts. ix.*

I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my Name's sake. Suppose then, you could be admitted to his Extasies and Revelations, yet even these, it is plain from his Example, would not exempt you from Trouble and Sufferings; For the more you are loved, and the more vehemently you love, and are desirous to please your Saviour; the greater Proofs of this kind you must expect to give.

Consider those *Apostles*, who went away from their Persecutors, *rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ.* And learn from thence to covet and value the Honour and Dignity of enduring Pain and Poverty, Persecution and Reproach. For this would seem no mean Preferment, but a Favour reserv'd for those whom God is kindest to; did we but reflect upon the Gain it brings to ourselves, the Glory to our Maker, the Joy to Saints and Angels, and the Benefit to our Brethren, who shall observe, and be encouraged by our Stedfastness, and Patience, and holy Perseverance. Nay, even the Wicked and carnal will be moved

moved by such Examples. For there is so manifest a Congruity and Decency, in submitting to any Adversities which it shall please God to lay upon us, that even they who have not the Heart to imitate, yet will not be able to forbear commending and admiring, the Pattern we set them.

Would we indeed weigh things in a just Balance, it is most unreasonable we should decline suffering for *Christ*, when it is so very visible, that we are well content to undergo much sorer Hardships for the World, than any he thinks fit to call us to. And shall Humour, or Passion, or temporal Interest, be suffered to prevail upon us more powerfully than Duty ? Especially when that Duty promotes an infinitely better Interest ; and the more we are mortified to ourselves and the World, the nobler Advances we make towards God and Life Eternal ? These are refined Privileges, for which no Man is qualify'd, till he be first purified in the Furnace of Adversity ; nor can the spiritual and divine Graces dwell in a Soul, till the Dross of Earth and sensual Appetites be first wrought off. Assure yourself, that suffering for, and in Obedience to Christ, is not only the most acceptable Thing to God, but really advantageous for yourself, and that which contributes most to the Soul's Health of any thing that can happen in the present State. And, would the Prejudices Flesh and Blood lie under, permit us to discern and consider Matter impartially, this would be first in our Wishes, and preferred before all the outward Prosperity, or inward Satisfactions this World can give. For who would not be ambitious of resembling our Lord, and his most eminent Saints ? Who is so blind, as not to see, that the Thing, in which they signalized their Merit, was not the larger degree of their Revelations, or the Pleasures they enjoy'd, but the Number and Extremity of their Afflictions ? And we may be very confident, that if Christ had known any better Way

to Heaven, than by Crosses and Patience, he would both have chosen it himself, and reserved it for his faithfullest Servants, and dearest Friends. But since

Luke xiv. his own Example, and his constant Directions declare, That if any Man will come to him, he must deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow him, it is but Folly and lost Labour to think of any other Method. For when all is done, this will

Acts xiv. be the Sum and Conclusion of the whole Matter, That thro' much Tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of God.

The End of the Second Book.

OF THE
 IMITATION
 OF
 JESUS CHRIST.

The Third Book.

Digested into Conferences between CHRIST
 and the Soul of his Disciple.

C H A P. I.

The Happiness of such a Conversation.

Disciple] **I** Will hear what the Lord *Psal. lxxxv. 8.*
 God will say concerning me.
 For blessed is the Soul which hears the
 Lord speaking, and feels the transport-
 ing Comforts of his gracious Words. Blessed are the
 Ears, which with a greedy Attention, drink in the
 soft and gentle Whispers of his Spirit, while they con-
 tinue obstinately deaf to the treacherous Insinuations
 of this deluding World. And doubly blessed are they
 who hear the Sound of Truth, not only in the out-
 ward Administrations of the Word, but by the in-
 ward and familiar Communications and Motions
 H 5 of

of infused Grace. Blessed those Eyes, which are shut to all the Objects of the World, and constantly wakeful and open to the Affairs of the Soul, and turned inward upon one's self. Blessed are they whose sharper Sight enters deep, and pierces into the secret and sublime Mysteries of heavenly Truth ; purged and prepared by spiritual Meditations, and daily Exercise of holy Duties. Blessed indeed are they, who disengage themselves from all worldly Incumbrances, and gain Leisure and Opportunities for attending continually upon God alone.

Consider this, my Soul, and shake off sensual Desires, which must be first abandoned, before thou canst listen with due Reverence and Attention to those Things, which the Lord God will speak. And O!

John xiv. what comfortable Words are those, *I am*
Gen. xvii, *thy Peace, thy Life, thy Salvation, and ex-*

Matth. xi. *ceeding great Reward. Come unto me thou*
that art weary and heavy laden, and thou

Coloss. iii. *shalt find Rest unto thy Soul. Set thy Affe-*
ctions on Things above, and not on Things

2 Cor. iv. *on the Earth. For the Things that are seen*
are temporal, but the Things that are not

seen are eternal. What are all things here below, but dangerous and empty Delusions ? And what could it profit a Man to gain, tho, it were all the Creatures, if he be forsaken and cast off by the Creator ? In him alone is Pleasure, and Bliss, and Glory. Therefore let go those cheating Shadows and embrace the only substantial Good ; bid a final Adieu to the Deceits of the World, and place all thy Love and Endeavours upon thy God ; for in his Service and Acceptance thou shalt attain the End of thy Wishes, the Fruit of thy Labours, solid Satisfaction and true Happiness.

C H A P. II.

God is in the small still Voice.

Disciple] **S**peak, Lord, for thy Servant *I Sam. iii.*
 heareth. Behold, I am thy *Psaln cxix.*
 Servant, and the Son of thy Handmaid; O give me Under-
 standing, that I may learn thy Commandments. In-
 cline my Soul to the Words of thy Mouth, *Dent. xxxii.*
 which drop down as the Rain upon the ten-
 der Herb, and distil gently, like Dew upon the Grass
 The Israelites indeed besought Moses heretofore, Speak
 thou unto us, and we will hear, but let not
 God speak unto us, lest we die. But let it *Exod. xx, 19.*
 not be so done unto me, my God. I ra-
 ther chuse to make my humble Petition in the Prophet
 Samuel's Form; Speak, Lord, for thy Servant heareth.
 Let not Moses, nor any of the Prophets, be my only
 Instructor, but do thou thyself also vouchsafe to teach
 me by thyself. For thou art the Source of all their
 Light and Knowledge. They could not utter Truth
 without thy Inspiration and heavenly Guidance; but
 thou art essential Wisdom and Truth, and canst com-
 municate thyself effectually to my Soul.

Their Words, alas, are Air and empty Sound, but
 thine alone are Spirit and Life. Their Expressions
 may be proper, their Arguments moving, but unless
 thou break Silence, my Soul will still continue deaf
 and insensible. They deliver the Words, but thou art
 the Interpreter, and lettest me into the true and hid-
 den Sense of their abstruse Oracles. Their Books are
 sealed, and only thy Hand can open and explain
 them. From them we receive the Command, but only
 from Thee the Disposition to obey, and the whole
 Power of performing it. They shew the Way, but
 thou impartest the Strength to walk in it; all they

can do, is still remote and without us. Thou only interest into the Soul, and by a secret Conveyance puttest

1 Cor. iii. Truth in the inward Parts. *Paul may plant, and Appollos water,* but except thou

Isa. iv. be pleased to give the Increase, the Word will return unto thee void, and accomplish

no part of the End whereto thou sentest it. The Voice of their Cry pierces our Ears ; but the knowing what they cry, and the Impression upon our Hearts, is thy peculiar Gift.

Therefore I cannot but implore again thy Grace and Mercy, and beg that *Moses* may not speak to me, but thou, my Lord, my God, the only and eternal Truth, lest I die ; not by the Terrors of thy thundring Voice, but by the effectual Communications of thy Will. For if I be instructed and admonished by the outward Ministration only, and be not inwardly disposed, and zealously affected to Obedience, the Advantages of Instruction will but aggravate my Condemnation. For this is the dismal Consequence of the Word

Heb. iv. preached not profiting, when it is not mixed with Faith in them that hear it. And

mixed with Faith thou knowest it cannot be, except seconded and enforced by the Voice of thy Spirit ; except thou incline me to love the Good I know, and enable me faithfully to fulfil the Doctrine I believe.

Speak therefore, Lord, I say again ; to thee thy Servant listens gladly, for *thou hast the Words*

John iv. of eternal Life. Speak powerfully to my

Soul, and carry the saving Truths home to my Conscience and Affections ; that thy Words may bring Comfort and Peace, Reformation and Holiness to thy attentive Servant, and to thyself immortal Honour and Praise.

C H A P. III

Of the General Disregard to God's Word, and the Obedience due to it.

Christ.] Since then, my Son, thou so passionately desirest to hear my Voice, incline thou thine Ears to my Words. Words, which well deserve, and will abundantly reward thy most diligent Attention; For they are sweet and charming, far above all the engaging Arts of Human Eloquence; useful and instructive, beyond the most laboured Systems of Philosophy. The Wisdom of this World could not invent, or order, nor can it comprehend them. The Mysterious Truths they declare are too strong for Human Sense to behold; nor canst thou enter into their Secrets, till guided by that Light from whence they flow. My Precepts are pure and spiritual, such as a Carnal and Impure Heart can find no Relish in. My every Word is of Weight; and spoken, not to entertain the Curious, and tickle Itching Ears, but to subdue the Heart, and command a strict Obedience. Hear therefore, but hear as becomes thee, with respectful Silence, and entire Submission; with profound and awful Humility; with an earnest Desire to be taught; and sincere and vigorous Resolutions of doing as thou art taught.

Disciple] I own the mighty Favour, and heartily acknowledge, with thy holy Prophet, That *Blessed is the Man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him in thy Law; That thou mayest give him Strength in time of Adversity, lest he fall away with the ungodly.* *Psal. xciv. 2.*

Christ.] That Prophet spoke what I inspired, and so did all those Holy Men of old; for they were all of my sending. Nor is my Care at all abated now, tho' the

the Effects of it may be less visible. For I, who taught them then, continue teaching still; Nay, I direct my Speech to All, but All will not hear it. For there are many deaf to all my Charms; and therefore deaf, because they stop their Ears; *hate my Instructions, and will none of my Reproofs.* They listen to the World much rather than to God, and are more disposed to obey their own Corrupt and Sensual, than his Pure and Heavenly Will. The World invites them with short and transitory, trifling and empty Joys, and they greedily engage in its Service; I covenant for Eternal and Excellent Rewards; and the insensible Wretches will not consider, or think them worth their Acceptance. This Folly is universal; For who among the Sons of Men, expresses half that Zeal and Earnestness, that solicitous Desire to please, and dutiful Fear to offend, in his Deportment towards me, which he does in Matters relating to this World, or in Obedience to Masters upon Earth? Consider this, and blush for Shame; for What, but Shame and Confusion of Face, can be the Effect of thy Reflection upon this unworthy Usage, this most absurd Folly?

A small Preferment is esteemed a valuable Consideration for long and painful Journeys. Men fly for it eagerly, and hasten all they can to get ground of their Competitors: This is every one's Care, and it is accounted a Reproach to be negligent in such Pursuits. But, when Advancement to Heaven and Eternal Happiness is offer'd, they are slothful and unactive, and scarce a Man is to be found, who thinks it worth the while to mend his Pace, or sets one Step forward to meet, or to secure, so glorious an Advantage. A little sordid Gain engages all Mens Industry; a trifling Sum embroils them in tedious and expensive Suits; And Promises of Things scarce worth their having, they are content to drudge for; to lose the Ease of their Days, and the Sleep of their Nights, and think their
Toil

Toil and Anxious Care well paid, if they can compass them at last; But a substantial and unchangeable Good, a Recompence, greater than they know how to value justly, Immortal Glory, and the Honours of the Saints, are sunk so low in wretched Mens Esteem, that the least Pains and Hardship are thought too much for them.

And art thou not ashamed, lazy, insensible, grumbling Wretch, that the Children of this World should pursue Death and Ruin, with a more vigorous Industry and Zeal, than thou canst find in thy Heart to bestow upon Life and Happiness? Shall Toys and Vanities win more upon their Affections, than solid and true Good can upon thine? Nay, even those Vanities, whose very Enjoyments are empty, do often mock their Hopes, and are never enjoyed at all: Their Friends promise and deceive; They labour but cannot attain: But my promises are without Repentance; None taxeth me with Breach of Faith, or can complain, that his Dependance upon my Word hath at any Time disappointed him. For I require only Love and Perseverance; And, if these be not wanting, I answer to the full, nay, I far exceed, my Servants largest Wishes and longing Expectations. Yet false and fickle Men can easily persuade, and the God, who cannot lye, calls and promises in vain! I am the sure Rewarder of all that diligently seek me; and if such meet with Sufferings and sharp Temptations, these are not Marks of my Displeasure, but wisely order'd and kindly intended, to prove the Sincerity of my Servants Zeal, and to illustrate their Virtues.

Write then my Words in thy Heart; Grave them in deep and lasting Characters; Ponder them diligently, for thou shalt find them a seasonable Relief and necessary Support in the Day of Trial and Adversity. What Reading only hath not taught thee, Affliction will interpret and make plain. For I do not
always

always visit my Chosen alike. Sometimes the Comforts of my Grace are proper ; at others, the withdrawing those Comforts, and bringing their Patience and Constancy to the Touch, by Outward Calamities, and Inward Anguish of Spirit. Thus I daily train them up in Goodness, by chastising and making them hate their Sins, and cultivating and encouraging their Advancement in Virtue. The One Dispensation engages their Love of me, the Other abates their Fondness for the World. But lost and wretched is that stupid Creature, upon whom these Methods make no Impression ; For *He that rejecteth Me, and* *John xii, 46.* *receiveth not my Words, hath One that judgeth him in the last Day.*

C H A P. IV.

A Prayer for Heavenly Instruction and Devotion,

Disciple.] **O** Lord my God, thou art my All, my only Good ; but Who, alas ! am I, that I should take upon me to speak to so Great, so Glorious a Majesty ? Poor sinful Dust and Ashes ; a wretched Worm ; less than the least of all thy Servants ; much less, much viler, and more despicable, than I dare to think, or am able to express or conceive. And this very Vileness, Lord, I beg thou wouldst consider, that so my helpless desolate Condition may move thy tender Pity, to a miserable Creature, who neither is, nor hath, nor can do any thing, without thee. For thou only art Good, and Holy, and Powerful ; and that of Power so boundless, of Mercy so diffusive, that thou fillest all things with thy Goodness ; and none but those guilty Souls, who refuse to partake of thy Grace, are shut out from its kindly In-

Influences. Behold me then hungry and thirsting after thy Righteousness, and let not me be sent empty away. Call up thy Bowels, and remember thy Compassions and old Loving kindneses, and fill my Soul with thy Grace and Heavenly Dispositions, that it may be a Dwelling fit to entertain that blessed Inhabitant, who will not take up his Abode in defiled and desolate Places.

But how can I furnish a House for my Lord, except he vouchsafe to assist and supply my Wants? How can I sustain the Miseries and Temptations of a Troublesome Dangerous World, except thou graciously interpose and support my Weakness? Turn not then thy Face away from me; neither delay thy Fatherly Care; for if thou grant not refreshing Dews, and water not my Heart with thy Grace, it will remain a dry and barren Ground. Teach me, dear God, to know and do thy Will; and with sincere Humility, and indefatigable Zeal, enable me to persevere in my Obedience. For Thou art my Wisdom, and my Righteousness; my Infirmities are not hid from Thee; Thou knowest me perfectly; and understoodest all my Defects, not only before I was born, but even long before the World itself was made;

C H A P. V.

Walk humbly with thy God, and worship Him in Truth.

Christ.] I Do indeed, my Son, Know they Frailties, and thy Dangers, but let not these discourage thy Endeavours. Seek and love the Truth, and let thy Heart be right with me, and all shall be well at last. For Truth and Sincerity will be thy Protection,

tion, and defend thee from the Assaults of th Devil, and the Attempts of wicked and deceitful Men. Those who are *thus set free, shall be free indeed*; nor shall the Seducements or the Discouragements of Enemies to the Truth, be able to ensnare or divert them from their Duty.

Disciple.] True, Lord. And this Persuasion makes me more earnestly implore thy Assistance. That thou, who art Truth itself, wouldst in much Mercy condescend to instruct, and direct me; to preserve and protect me; to break the Snares of the ungodly to pieces; to deliver my Soul, and establish me unto the End; To purge me from all corrupt and inordinate Affections, that my own happy Experience may convince me of what I already believe, and render thy Service perfect Freedom,

Christ.] My Children cannot be more zealously disposed to ask these Blessings, than I am ready and pleased to grant them. Hear therefore the Truth, and how thou mayest recommend thyself to my Favour and Acceptance. Reflect with sad Remorse upon thy past Offences; let the Remembrance of these render thee vile in thy own Eyes; and take heed, that no Confidence in thy best Actions, swell thee with vain Conceits of thy own Deserts. For sure it is, thou art a Sinner, laden with Guilt and many grievous Infirmities; prone in thy own Nature to Vanity, easily seduced, quickly diverted from good Resolutions, and overcome by very slight Temptations. In short; No Excellence belongs to thee, which can in any degree justify thy Pride or Boasting; but infinite Occasions there are to exercise thy Humility and Lamentation, infinitely more in Truth, than thou canst be duly sensible of.

Let not then the mistaken Value of any thing thou art, or doest, delude thee with false Appearances of Worth and Perfection; Let not thy Affections be seduced

duced to follow vain and wretched Objects, or think any Advantage can deserve thy Praise or Admiration, thy Love and Pains ; except such only as are fix'd and Eternal. Let Truth be thy chief Delight, for This is unchangeable ; let thy own Unworthiness be the chief Object of thy Hatred and Contempt, for this is the vilest, the justest Thing, upon which thy Displeasure can discharge itself. Fear and decline no Calamity, comparably to Sin. For no Loss, no worldly Disappointment or Disaster can have so fatal Consequences, as the Loss of a good Conscience and God's Favour, by transgressing his Righteous Commands.

Some Men are more concerned for Subtily of Knowledge in Religion, than for an humble and sincere Obedience. They are acted by a Spirit of Pride and Curiosity, and effect to penetrate the Mysteries of Faith ; and value themselves much more for being able learnedly to dispute for Truth, than for adorning it by their Lives, and rendring that Knowledge effectual to Salvation. These Men frequently fall into dangerous Snares. I set my Face against their Arrogance, and suffer them to perish thro' the Vanity of their own Imaginations.

But do thou employ thy Mind upon other Sorts of Enquiries, and account it greater Wisdom to get a perfect Knowledge of thy own Works, than those of Almighty God. *His Ways are unsearchable, and past finding out ;* but thy own are necessary to be nicely examined. And the Consideration of the Evil thou hast done, and the Good thou hast left undone, will turn to better Account, than thy Scholastick Speculations, concerning the Divine Nature and Counsels. Some place their Religion in Images, some in Good Books, some in an outward Shew and Pomp of Devotion, measuring their Piety by the Prayers they say, the Sermons they hear, the Meals they abstain from ; Others honour me with their Lips,

and talk familiarly of me, whose Hearts I am as utter a Stranger to, as their allowing me no place in their Thoughts and Affections can make me. But some again, without such formal Pretences, are Men of true Spiritual Wisdom, and inward Purity ; their Desires and Conversation are in Heaven, and earthly Entertainments are no longer welcome to them ; they even grudge those Hours, which the necessary Cares for supporting these Bodies cut off from the greater Concerns of their Souls. And these are the Men, that lend a willing Ear, and bring a Temper truly teachable to the Instructions of my Spirit : In Them he reigns and triumphs. For, having vanquished the Corrupt Inclinations of Flesh, and inspired them with a true Christian Bravery of Soul, they despise the treacherous Vanities of this World, and lay out all their Love and Labour upon the Joys of that better World, which, till God thinks fit to admit them into it, they strive to anticipate, by keeping their Minds Night and Day intent upon it.

CH A P. VI.

The Power of the Love of GOD.

Disciple.] I Laud and magnify thy glorious Name, O Father of Heaven, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for all the Goodness and Tender Compassions, with which thou hast been pleased to remember and relieve my Misery. For unto thy Loving-kindness alone, O Father of Mercies, and God of all Comfort, are owing all the Supports, with which the Soul of thy unworthy Servant hath been at any time refreshed in the midst of my Trouble. And therefore to Thee alone be the Praise, To Thee, O Father, with
the

the only Begotten Son, and the Blessed Spirit the Comforter, will I render Honour and Thanksgiving for evermore. Descend then, Blessed God, into that Soul, for which thou hast expressed so great a Tenderness, and let thy Presence fill me with Gladness : For thou art my Health, my Joy and my Glory, my Hope and my Refuge in the Day of Distress.

I must confess with Sorrow that my Love is weak, and my Virtue imperfect ; nor can the one be supported without thy Grace, or the other be cherished, unless thou fan thy Holy Fire, and feed it with thy Heavenly Comforts. O visit me then with thy Salvation, and make me to improve under thy Holy Discipline. Deliver and purify my Heart from all corrupt Affections, and irregular Passions ; heal my Spiritual Diseases, and take away that Dross and Filth, which obstruct my purer Delights of Divine Love, discompose my Patience, and shake my Intentions of Perseverance.

For Love is great and powerful, an excellent Virtue, and mighty Advantage in Well-doing. It lightens the heaviest Burthens, makes Difficulties easy, and smoothes the Rugged Ways of Duty ; takes out the Bitterness of Sufferings, and gives them a delightful Relish. This is the Principle, which fires us with a vigorous and active Zeal, inspires brave and noble Attempts, and spurs us on with an impatient Desire of still higher Degrees of Perfection. For Love ever labours to be uppermost, and disdains to take up with low and vulgar Attainments. It hates Confinement, and would fain get loose from all Worldly Affections ; that so its inward and spiritual Prospects may not be intercepted, by any Temporal Good or Evil, which darken and block it up. In Love is the Perfection of Pleasure and Strength ; it is higher than Heaven ; broader than the Sea ; it fills the spacious Universe, for it is born of God ; The first and best of all his

Creatures. And as it came from Him, so it never rests till it have got above all Finite Beings, and center again in that Only, that Infinite Good, from whence it originally sprung.

The Person acted by it flies with eager Haste, does every thing with Chearfulness and Pleasure, and suffers no Impediments to stop him in his Course : He gives all Things liberally, and yet possesses All, because his Soul is united to that Supreme Good, in and from whom is all Perfection. He looks not so much at the Gift as the Giver ; and be the Quality of that what it will, it only serves to render him more grateful to its Author. Love knows no Bounds, no Measure ; but thinks it can never do enough ; and attempts Things even above its Strength, not considering so much what it is able, as what it is desirous and disposed to effect ; The Vehemence of Desire takes off all Sense of Difficulty, and thinks nothing so great but that it may and ought to aim at it. And hence proceed those mighty and astonishing Atchievements, which Love does daily bring to pass, where the Fire continues strong, and is not damped by Sloth and Faint-heartedness.

Love is eternally awake, never tired with Labour, nor oppressed with Affliction, nor discouraged by Fear ; But, like a clear and strong Flame, is ever mounting upwards, and makes its Way thro' all Opposition. It cries continually in the Ears, (for fervent Love is that Cry which pierces the Ears) of the most highest ; and all the Language of Devout Souls inflamed with it, is to this Effect : *My God, My Love, thou art my All ; and I am entirely Thine.* Enlarge my Heart, and make me capable of yet more Love ; that I may feel and feast upon the Sweetness of the delightful Affection, and even melt away and lose myself in the Extasies and Charms of this heavenly Disposition. Increase and blow up this divine Flame, that, not content

to excel others, I may daily excel myself. Teach me the Song of Love, and receive me up on high, to Him in whom my Soul delighteth; and fill me with such Raptures of Joy and Praise, that even Sense and Life may be swallowed up in Bliss. Let me love thee much more than myself; nay, love myself and all good Men, to whom thou art dear, only in and for Thee; For so hast thou commanded in that Law of Love, which is but as it were a Beam and Efflux of thy own Glorious and Divine Excellence.

The Love of God is nimble in its Motions, sincere in its Intentions, ardent and zealous in Devotion, sweet to the Soul, brave in Attempting, patient in Enduring, faithful in Executing, prudent in Action, slow in Resentment, generous and manly, and seeks not to please the Person's self, but the Person beloved. For, where a Man seeks his own Advantage only, there Interest, not Love, is the Principle upon which he moves, Love is cautious and circumspect, upright and humble; not soft and effeminate, not fickle and fanciful, not fond of Vanities; but sober and grave, chaste and refined, constant and sedate, severe and reserved. This disposes us to Submission and Respect towards our Superiors; to a mean and modest Opinion of ourselves; to Gratitude and Devotion towards God; it inspires Hope and holy Trust, even in Times of Calamity and Discomfort. And necessary it is that it should do so, since no Man is so happy as to love without Pain, or always to live under the Light of God's Countenance, so as that no Clouds should ever intercept the cheering Warmth of his Favour, and create some dark Intervals.

That Man therefore does not deserve the Character of One that loves God, who is not disposed and content to suffer any Afflictions, which the Divine Providence sees fit to inflict; or thinks much to do whatever his Will declares fit to be performed. In a word,

The hardest and most unpalatable Proofs of our Virtue, best declare the Fervency and Sincerity of it ; And if Disasters or Calamitous Accidents cool or draw off our Affections, this is an Argument, that a Man is not yet what the *Apostle* requires we should all be,
Ephes. iii. 17. Rooted and grounded in Love.

C H A P. VII.

The Trial of true Love.

Christ.] I Have observed, my Son, thy Notions of Divine Love ; but Thou, alas ! art not yet arrived to that resolute Bravery and Prudence there described.

Disciple.] Lord, make me sensible wherein I fail, and teach me how to mend it.

Christ.] A small Temptation shocks thy Obedience. Thou bogglest at Difficulties, and fallest from thy own Stedfastness, if I seem to withdraw my Favour. The Comforts and Assistance of Graces are to be wish'd with Zeal, but not with Impatience ; Nor mayest thou so set thy Heart upon them, as presently to recoil, if such Supplies do not at all times answer thy Expectation. I hide my Face to try thy Courage. For true Christian Magnanimity is most eminently seen in Troubles and Distresses ; in turning the Deaf Ear to all those crafty Insinuations of the Enemy, which take the Advantage of Melancholy and deep Perplexity of Heart, to ruin and seduce unstable Souls, by tempting them to despair. This Virtue rejoices in Prosperity, but does it with such Temper, as not to be offended, and fall away by reason of Adversity.

He that loves prudently, keeps his Eyes upon the Giver, considers the Kindness and Disposition of his
 Friend.

Friend, and values the Gift by that, not by its own Quality and intrinsic Worth. He finds more real Satisfaction, in my Affection, than in the most profuse and desirable Benefits which flow from it. Not that I would condemn all Doubts and sad Misgivings, for those are incident to the best Men ; and the Infirmities of Nature do not admit such perfect Evenness of Mind, as is always affected alike with the Love and Delights of Holiness. Those sensible Pleasures that good Men sometimes feel themselves transported with, are the Effect of Bounty and Favour, and great Indulgence ; not necessary and inseparable Consequences of Virtue. The sweet Foretastes of Heavenly Joys are such as you cannot depend upon, till brought to the Fruition of that Land of Promise. And therefore no just Conclusions can be drawn from thence, to the Prejudice of those who want them ; because in this Life they are given at Discretion, and frequently make way for a severer and more seasonable Discipline. And when that Discipline takes Place, then to persist in doing well, to strive manfully against all the Reluctancies of frail Flesh and Blood and hold out in despite of all the Importunities and discouraging Suggestions of the Tempter ; this is a Proof of true Spiritual Bravery, and entitles such valiant Combatants to a noble Reward, and exceeding bright Crown.

Let Reason therefore, and a well-grounded Faith, not Fancy and Imagination, govern thy Behaviour ; And, after what manner soever thy Soul is affected, let thy Purposes of Obedience be still the same, and thy Perseverance unbroken. Sometimes perhaps thou art all Rapture and Joy, and these Extasies are not what the prophane World suppose, mere Dreams and Delusions : Sometimes again thou wilt relapse into Weakness and Wandrings ; these are not thy Choice, but thy Misfortune ; Nor dost thou create them to

thyself, but suffer them with much Regret. Now what is not the Man's own Act, shall never be imputed to him as a Fault ; and what is thus by God's Permission, or the Frailty of Nature, if rightly managed, will tend to thy Advantage, and rather improve than endanger thy Virtue.

This indeed you must know, and constantly remember : That the inveterate Enemy of Souls is ever labouring by all means to cool your Zeal. He watches and greedily takes hold of all Occasions to slacken your Devotions, to prevail with you to neglect, or abate of, your Prayers and other Holy Exercises ; to divert your Thought of Christ and his Sufferings, and fix them upon Objects of a different Kind ; to beat you off from that strict Guard, which ought always to be kept upon your Soul ; and to undermine your good Intentions, and repeated Resolutions. He conveys many loose and wicked Thoughts into your Heart, uses a thousand Sleights and Artifices, to represent Religion a tiresome, tedious and unnecessary Thing, and to draw off your Attendance upon God in Prayers, in hearing his Word, in reading the Holy Scriptures. And happy, he thinks himself, if by degrees he can draw you to a Disuse of these Things : For nothing more provokes his Malice, and crosses his Designs, than to see Men frequently upon their Knees, zealous in discovering and confessing their Sins ; devout and attentive Comers to Church ; and constant Receivers of the Lord's Supper. When therefore he would persuade you to be cold and remiss in any Matter of this Nature, be sure to give no Credit to his false and wheedling Insinuations, for they are so many Snares laid to captivate and destroy you. Turn smartly back upon him, with a *Get thee behind me, Satan* ; »Blush, if thou canst, unclean Spirit, at » thy own treacherous Villany ; I am well aware of » thy deadly Baits ; and sensible that Hell and Death

are upon the Hook; Thy fly Deceits are lost upon Me, for I am resolved already, and my Jesus, who vanquished thee upon the Cross, will assist my Weakness, and enable me to overcome thy Temptations. Think not to terrify me with Difficulties; for Death and Sufferings are light Calamities, in comparison of Guilt and Sin; and these I infinitely rather chuse than once to comply with thy wicked Motions. Be gone then, and for ever hold thy Peace; for I will stop my Ears, and am from this Minute inflexibly deaf to thy most troublesome Solicitations. Thou thinkest to run down a poor weak Mortal, but even that Mortal is a Match for thee through Christ that strengthens him. And strengthen me he will; for the Lord is my Light and Salvation, whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my Life, of whom then shall I be afraid? *Psal. xxvii.* Tho' an Host were banded together against me, yet will I not be dismay'd; for the Lord is my Helper, and my God is the Rock of my Confidence.

Fight therefore the good Fight, and follow the Captain of thy Salvation, like a stout Soldier. And, if at any time thou lose Ground through Human Infirmities, rally thy Forces again quickly, and enter upon a second Engagement with redoubled Vigor; not doubting seasonable Recruits from Me. But if at any Time thou prove victorious, let not this Success exalt thee beyond measure. For Pride and Arrogance are of fatal Consequence, they often end in dangerous Errors, and are justly punished with almost incurable Blindness, Let the frequent Examples of Vain Men, undone by their own Folly and my just Indignation, be set before thy Eyes, as so many Sea-marks, to warn thee from steering the same dangerous Course: And the greater Conquests thou obtainest over the Devil and thy own Frailty, the more humble and cautious let these Advantages make thee in thy Conduct; and the more just to God,

God, in ascribing the whole Success and Glory to the powerful Assistance of his Grace.

C H A P. VIII.

Grace must be received without Ostentation.

Christ.] MY Son when thou feelest, thy Soul warmed with Devotion and holy Zeal for my Service, it will be advisable to decline all those Methods of publishing it to the World, which Vain Men are so industrious to take, and content thyself with its being known to God and thy own Conscience, Rather endeavour to moderate and suppress those pompous Expressions of it, in which some place the very Perfection of Zeal. Think meanly of thy own Virtues. Boast not of that Grace, whereby thou art capable of differing from another. But let the Remembrance of thy own Unworthiness make thee fear the Loss of Gifts, which thou didst not deserve ever to have. This is not only an undeserved, it is also a very short and uncertain Privilege; for the brightest and warmest Zeal is apt to languish and wax cold; and unless Men could assure themselves of such a Degree of Grace, as would alter and fix these variable Natures of theirs, the Fervours of Religious and Holy Desires can never be constant and equal.

While therefore thou enjoyest these pleasing pious Comforts, humble thy Soul with Reflections upon thy Impotence and Misery, thy Coldness and Deadness, when thou hast them not. And consider withal, that the Improvement and Commendation of a Christian's Virtue consists, not only in the thankful Use of Grace, but in a modest, humble and resigned Temper, which

can bear its being taken away without Murmuring or Despondency ; still exciting and encouraging itself, still continuing the same Diligence in holy Duties, and never suffering Sloth, or Despair, or Discontent, to abate one whit of a Man's best Endeavours, to do the utmost his Condition is capable of.

This is an Excellence which very few come up to ; Idleness and Impatience are the usual Effects of Spiritual Disappointments. Which yet is most unreasonable, if we think at all, in whose Disposal these, as well as all other Successes are. For Man cannot command Events ; God is sole Master of his own Favours. He gives to whom he pleases ; not will he be limited, otherwise than by his own Wisdom, what or how much, or in what time and manner he shall give. And even when he is most liberal, Men may convert his best Gifts into Occasions of their own Destruction. Thus some Men of bold ungoverned Zeal aspire at things beyond their Strength, and express more Vehemence than Conduct in their Actions. They are perfectly carried out of themselves with Eagerness ; forget they are still poor Insects upon Earth, and think of nothing less than building their Nest in Heaven. Now these are often left to themselves, and taught by sad Experience, that the faint Flutterings of Man are weak and ineffectual, and that none soars to Heaven, except I assist his Flight and mount him upon my own Wings.

It is therefore highly expedient, that Persons of more Zeal than Experience, should not proceed upon their own false Measure of themselves, but refer their Proceedings to the Guidance, and better Judgment of some Persons, whom long Time, and much Observation hath taught to temper those vain Conceits they are apt to entertain of their own Strength, and to proportion their Undertakings to their Circumstances. But this is a Submission which Humility must qualify them

them for. For he who is wise in his own Eyes, seldom endures to be directed by another. And this Consideration makes a very moderate degree of Knowledge, attended with a modest and governable Mind, much more safe and eligible, than the highest Attainments with Pride and Self-conceit. The mighty Transports and great Satisfaction Men frequently feel from their own Improvement in Goodness, are of dangerous Consequence, if they be suffered to destroy the Remembrance of a Man's former Weakness, and his Fears of relapsing into Sin again. And on the other hand, these Fears may run into Excess, if Difficulties tempt Men to despair, and beget melancholy Distrusts of God's Ability and Readiness to relieve and rescue them by the Succours of that Grace, which knows how to scatter, and defeat the strongest Temptations.

The Same Disposition of Soul, which leads to Security in Times of Prosperity and Peace, inclines to Fearfulness and Dejection of Mind in the Day of Adversity and Conflict. For would a Man but guard himself against vain Confidences, and proceed always with Caution and Prudence, when his Graces and his Hopes are at the highest ; this would preserve him from those Dangers, which unwary Heat and too sanguine Hopes are apt to involve him in. And therefore, when you form to yourself the fairest and most promising Expectations, it will be seasonable to consider, what may become of you, if God should hide his Face and abate or wholly withdraw those cheering Comforts, which now so much exalt you. And so again, when these are interrupted, support your Spirits in those dark Intervals, with the Hope that Day may break upon you again, and that this Night of Affliction is prolonged, to make you more advised, and get the greater Honour.

For such Trials as these are more for the Advantage of my faithful Servants, than a constant Succession of Prosperity and Consolation could possibly be. They must needs be so ; since Virtue does not consist in abundance of Illumination and Knowledge ; but in Lowliness of Mind, in Meekness and Charity, in a Mind entirely resigned to God, and sincerely disposed to serve and please him ; in a just Sense of a Man's own Vileness, and not only thinking very meanly of One's self, but being well content to be so thought of by Others.

C H A P. IX.

Of acknowledging our Unworthiness before God.

Disciple.] **B**Ehold, now I take upon me to Gen. xviii.
 speak unto my Lord, who
 am but Dust and Ashes, vile and sinful Dust and Ashes !
 For, should I entertain any better Opinion of myself,
 I make my God my Enemy, and stand convicted by
 the undeniable Testimony, and just Reproaches of my
 own guilty Conscience, But if I humble my Soul,
 cast off all vain Imaginations of Merit, and think my
 self that wretched thing I really am ; thy Grace exalts
 me, thy Light cheers and supports me, and all that
 groundless Arrogance, to which my corrupt Heart is
 naturally disposed, vanishes into nothing. O ! give
 me then a right Understanding of myself ; help me
 truly to discern what I am now, what I was original-
 ly, and whence I came. That I am nothing, and pro-
 ceeded out of nothing, and if destitute of thy Grace,
 have nothing left, but what I had much better be
 without, even Sin and Infirmary. And yet as vile, as
 sinful, as dejected, as I am of myself, as soon as thy
 bright

bright Beams of Favour are cast upon me, my Weakness is made strong, and my Heaviness turned into Joy I cannot observe the sudden wondrous Change without Astonishment, and am not able to account for the happy Exaltation of my Nature ; which, tho' by its own Weight inclined to sink perpetually, and by a fatal Tendency to Sin and Hell, press'd down with a Load of Flesh and Frailty, is yet, by the mighty Operations of Grace, enabled to aspire to spiritual and refined Objects, and take noble Flights to Thee and Heaven.

This, I am duly sensible, is the strange Effect of thy free Grace alone, preventing my Desires, inspiring noble Thoughts, assisting my Weaknesses, supplying my Wants, rescuing me from Dangers innumerable ; which, without these powerful Succours, must unavoidably destroy and swallow me up. For an inordinate Love of myself was formerly my Ruin, but a sincere Love of Thee, and an entire Dependence upon thy Goodness, recovers and restores me ; and the more I love and trust in Thee, the less Reason I find to value and have any Confidence in any thing of my own. For Thou, O dearest Redeemer, art bountiful and kind, far beyond my Deserts : My Deserts ! Alas, they are none at all, or worse than none : But Thou exceedest even my largest Desires, and givest more, infinitely more, than I either dare presume to ask, or am able to express.

Eternal Thanks and Praise be therefore rendred to my God, for that unspeakable Goodness, which does not disdain to bestow the precious Gifts of his Grace and Spirit, upon a Wretch unworthy the least of all his Mercies. Yea, blessed and adored be his Liberality and Long-suffering, which, in despite of all our Provocations, continues to engage those by Kindness, who, by their former Ingratitude and Abuse of it, had justly forfeited all future Favours ; and by
many

many excellent Arts and holy Importunities, invites and draws Men to himself and their own Happiness, who have an Aversion to both. Even so, sweet Jesus, extend thy Compassion, and continue thy Care of us who are too prone to neglect thee, and ruin ourselves. Oh! bring us to thyself, by thankful, humble, pious Dispositions; for we ourselves are nothing, and Thou art Holiness and Health, our only Strength and Salvation.

C H A P. X.

Of doing all to the Glory of GOD.

Christ.] THE sure and only Way to Happiness is, to make Me, my Son, the chief and ultimate End of all thy Actions and Desires. By this thy Sincerity will best be proved; by this thy Mind is refined and purified from all those sordid Interests and partial Respects, which are apt to debauch human Nature; too much of itself addicted to private Gain and Selfishness, and those false Prospects of Happiness which the Love of this World vainly proposes. For as soon as any Man descends to these, and seeks *himself* in all he does; he finds his own Inability to compass his Intentions; and grows barren and unprofitable. Keep Me then constantly in view, and aim at nothing but the Advancement of my Honour; which is indeed but reasonable and just, since I am the first and perfect Good, the Source from whence all Things flow, and therefore all of Right return to, and should enter at last in me again. I ask but of my Own, the Tribute and Acknowledgment of the Successes given by my Providence, of the Actions performed by Virtue of my Concurrence, of the very Facul-
ties

ties and Powers originally inspired by my creating Spirit.

The High and Honourable, as well as Mean and Low, the Rich and Poor, all drink of this common Fountain, and the most powerful of the Sons of Men can do nothing, till furnished with Ability from hence. This Spring is inexhaustible, and they who receive most, and are greateful in their Returns, I water with more liberal Measures of Grace. Them that honour me, I never fail to honour and bless in a visible and eminent manner ; but if Men glory in any thing but the Lord, I blast their Devices, disappoint their Hopes, make them ashamed of their vain Boastings. For so have I ordered Matters by my Providence, that no true lasting Satisfaction shall ever fill that Heart which sets its Affections upon private and paltry Advantages. Crosses from without, and Perplexities from within, are the certain Consequence of worldly Desires, and selfish Principles.

If therefore thou hast received, or done any Good thing, take care of misplacing the Honour and Thanks due for it, upon thyself, or any other Person. For this is robbing God of his Due, from whom Men receive whatever they have or are, and stand in Duty and Equity bound, to pay him their Acknowledgments. Since therefore the whole is my Gift, when I demand the whole Thanks and Praise, I demand but the Product of my own ; and this is what, as I injure no Man in requiring, so I resolve never to depart from.

This is the true Principle of Justice. Necessary to be considered, and thoroughly submitted to ; because it checks and utterly confounds that other most pernicious Principle of Pride and Vain-glory, to which Mankind are so exceeding prone. Nor is it less conducive to their Happiness, than to their Duty. For, where this generous Love and Regard of Me takes
place

place, it does not only engage my Favour, but secures the Man from Envy and discontent, Partiality, and every other Passion that Uses to torment little and worldly-minded People, For this respectful Deference and fervent Love of God enlarges the Soul, and fills it with great and truly noble Thoughts. And therefore this is a certain Mark of true and heavenly Wisdom, to make Me its only Joy and Hope : For how can he be wise, who does not see that God is the Perfection and Original of all Good, and that the necessary Consequence of his being so, is, that he is to be praised, honoured, admired, in, and for, and above all ; since all the Good which Men pretend to esteem, is by Communication from him ; an Emanation from his Fulness, an Effect of that sole, that universal Cause ?

C H A P. XI.

God's Service is perfect Freedom.

Disciple.] I Will again take the Confidence to speak unto the Lord ; Nor ought I indeed to hold my Peace, but adress myself to thee, my Lord and God, my heavenly King, that sittest on thy Throne far above the Skies, and thus will I proclaim thy Mercies and my own Happiness. How pure, O Lord, how sweet, how exquisite are the Pleasures thou reservest for them that fear thee, that delight themselves in thy Love, that are entirely devoted to thy Service. No Tongue can worthily express the wondrous Joys, the Transports, and ravishing Extasies, which fill these pious Souls, inflamed with the Love, and employed in the Contemplation of Thee. For this is a Subject boundless as thy Goodness ; that

Goodness, which exerted itself in commanding me out of Nothing. And when that Being which thou gavest was rendred liable to eternal Misery, a fresh, and yet more valuable Instance of thy Mercy, was that of bestowing upon me a new and better Life, when I was worse then Nothing. For thou hadst Compassion on my Weakness and my Wandrings. Thou soughtest, and with tender Care broughtest back thy lost Sheep; taughtest me the right Way, helpedst me to walk in it, and didst instruct and guide me in thy Love.

O thou overflowing Spring of endless Love, how shall I worthily magnify thee; how can I forget thee; Thee, who in my lowest Ebb of Misery, didst condescend so graciously, so effectually, to remember me? Whose Kindness rescued me from Death, and far exceeded all my Hopes; restored me to that Favour, which my Sins had forfeited, and shewed itself a Friend to that Wretch who was become thine, and his own Enemy. *What shall I render to the Lord Psal. cxvi. for all the Benefits he hath done unto me?*

If I resolve to serve thee, yet how poor a Tribute is that, to Him whom all created Nature is bound to serve? This is so far from a sufficient Return, that I ought rather to admire thy Mercy, and esteem it an Honour to myself when thou vouchsafest to accept the Service of so poor, so worthless a Creature, and dost not disdain to reckon me amongst those, whom thou sufferest to do thee Homage.

For even in this I pay thee but thy own, since I and all I have are thine. But why do I speak of serving thee; when by a most astonishing Condescension, even thou, the mighty God, art pleased to serve me. For this is the Effect of that excellently good Providence, which hath contrived and ordered Heaven and Earth, and all the Creatures in such a manner, that they should be useful and beneficial to Mankind; which hath appointed blessed Spirits above for Guards and Mi-

Ministers to the Heirs of Salvation; and, which is most surprising, when Thou thyself, for my sake, hadst taken upon thee the Form of a Servant, and wert made a frail, an afflicted Man ! When thou didst give thy Life for undone Sinners, and still dost give thyself in Grace, and hast engaged to give thyself, even the full and eternal Fruition of thy glorious Godhead, to every sincere Believer.

O ! that it were in my Power to make a suitable Return, for Love which passes, not my Thanks only, but even my Knowledge ! O ! that my Ways were made so direct, that my whole Life might be one continued Act of Gratitude and Obedience ! Nay, such is my Infirmary, that I must be content to wish, that any one Day of that Life might be employed as it ought in thy Service, I know, O Lord, that thou art worthy to receive all Duty, and Honour, and Praise for ever. I am sensible that thou art my rightful Lord, and thy poor Servant; that the utmost I can do is thy just Due, and that I ought to take unspeakable Delight in thanking and obeying thee; that nothing else but this should give me any Satisfaction, and that when I have laid my self out entirely upon it, I still have done too little. This is the real Persuasion, this is the earnest Desire of my Soul; and where my Power falls short of my Inclination, there do thou, I beseech thee, strengthen and supply what is wanting, by thy Grace, that my Deeds and Deportment may bear Testimony and Proportion to my pious Disposition.

To be the meanest of thy Servants is the highest Advancement; to despise and forsake all for thee, is true Riches and Honour. They who thus enter themselves into thy Family, and chearfully undertake this Task, shall have a glorious Reward; they will feel the Pleasures of this World infinitely paid, infinitely outdone, by the better and larger Amends of Grace and

divine Comforts in exchange. They who thus bind themselves to thee, that abandon worldly Cares, and attend to the One Thing necessary, attain to true and generous Freedom of Soul. For the strait Way of thy Commandments is the only perfect Law of Liberty. O happy Confinement ! which sets Men at large from the Slavery of Sin, from worldly Cares and Incumbrances, from the insupportable Tyranny of unruly Appetites and domineering Passions ! O blessed Dependence ! which makes us of the most high God's Retinue, raises us up to a Level with the Angels, renders us dear to the Almighty, a Terror to evil Spirits, Conquerors over our greatest and fiercest Enemy, and recommends us to the Love, the praise, the Imitation, of all good Men. Who would not greedily embrace such a Service, where the very Work is pleasant, the Encouragements paid down in Hand noble and great, and the Waged promises in Recompence for our Labours. Happiness exquisite, unspeakable, and everlasting ?

C H A P. XII.

Of regulating our Desires.

Christ.] YET still, my Son, there are many things, in which thou art not sufficiently instructed.

Disciple.] Lord, be thou pleased to let me know, and enable me to receive, and do them.

Christ.] Thy Desires must be reduced into Subjection, and my Will take place in every thing ; Nor must thy own private Interest, but the Zeal and Regard for my Honour, and the Obedience due to my Commands, be the governing Principle of all thy Actions,

Actions. You feel Desires, like inward Springs, put you into motion; and very eager sometimes you are of doing what you are verily persuaded is good. But even when the Thing itself is commendable, the Intention and Motive Men go upon, ought to be nicely considered. For it makes a mighty difference, whether I or themselves be principally in their Thoughts. Now this Discovery is not hard to make. For if my Honour be their great Concern; whosoever my Providence disposes their Affairs, they will conclude what I do best, and will be contented with it. But if under this Disguise of Holiness, there be a lurking Corruption of privat and by-respects, if Gain makes Men frugal, or Ambition virtuous, or the Praise of the World charitable, or the Consideration of their own Health temperate; these are Principles, upon which no Dependance can safely be had. Their Conduct will be unequal, and vary as Events do, and every Disappointment of their Expectations will produce Trouble and Impatience.

Do not therefore be too confident of every sort of Inclination to do well; but first advise with Me, and take care to build upon a good Foundation. For Men, who act upon indirect Ends, very often repent when it is too late; and that which at first they proposed, great Satisfaction and Advantage from, proves at long run their Torment and Loss. Nay, I must give you this farther Caution yet, That even good Inclinations are not to be taken at first sight, nor rashly pursued without a diligent and prudent Observation. For it may be convenient sometimes, to put some Restraints upon the very best Intentions. They who neglect this, and give free Scope tho their Zeal by too great Eagerness, often exceed the Bounds of Moderation and Decency; sometimes give Offence to their Brethren by their extravagant Heats, and impetuous Sallies; and sometimes, upon any Resistance or Difficulty, which

obstructs those precipitate Fervours, lose all their inward Peace, desist from their good Designs, and fall from the Heighth of Rapture, to the Extremeties of Melancholy and Despair. So, that, to make thy Zeal in Well-doing in all Points what it ought to be, it is by no means sufficient, that it be honest and well-disposed, unless it be also sober, and regular, and discreet.

Again, there are some Occasions and Circumstances, which render a sort of holy Violence necessary, and oblige Men to act quite contrary to their Inclination ; to bear no manner of Regard to Flesh and Sense ; or what will be most agreeable any farther than may serve to set the Mind in array against them, and resolutely engage in a formal War, for the reducing, or keeping them in Obedience to the superior Faculties of the Soul. For, by thus frequently controuling and counter-working all that human Nature hath a Tendency to, the outward Man is by degrees qualified for Duty ; and acquires a great readiness of doing, or suffering, whatever shall be imposed upon it. And in these Exercises the first Foundations are laid, of Contentedness with a little, of Satisfaction in a private and neglected State, a mean and narrow Fortune ; and of Patience under any Crosses or Calamities, without those murmuring Thoughts, which are apt to beget hard and irreverent Reflections and too often break out in wicked Complaints, and saucy Expostulations, against the Justice, and Wisdom, and Goodness of God and Providence.

C H A P. XIII.

The Necessity and Reasonableness of Patience.

Disciple.] **B**Y all the Collections I am able to make from my dear Lord's Instructions, and the little Experience I have of the World, Patience seems to me a most necessary Virtue ; for the Condition of Man in this Life is so exposed to Calamities and Sorrows, that, in despite of all his Endeavours after Peace, Troubles await him every where, and his State is that of Warfare and continual Suffering.

Christ.] It is so, my Son ; Nor is it fit it should be otherwise. For those Men have a wrong Notion of Peace, who make it consist in Freedom from Suffering ; in either having no Troubles, or being insensible of any. This is a State, neither attainable by a Man, nor convenient for a Christian. The Peace I would have thee aspire after, is such as consists very well with Afflictions. And this is gained, when a Man hath brought himself to that equal Composure, and resigned Temper of Soul, as firmly to persist in his Duty, and to rest satisfied in the Dispensations of God, when he thinks fit to try his Virtue by very great and grievous Adversities. If this appear a hard Saying, think how much harder it will be to endure the Torments of Hell, and the implacable Vengeance of an enry God. Nature, as well as Religion, teaches Men, of two Evils to chuse the less. And this is done, when they set themselves submissively to undergo Tribulation here, for the sake of God and a good Conscience ; that they may, by such patient suffering, deliver themselves from the dire Effects of his Wrath, and never-ceasing Punishment hereafter.

Now Tribulation is a Portion distributed in common to all the Sons of Men; distributed in large Measures, even to those Children of this Generation, which thou perhaps vainly imaginest to be most exempted from it. For even the gayest and most prosperous of them all are not without their many and sore Evils. It is true indeed they take a great deal of Pleasure, indulge their Inclinations without Controul, and so their Misery makes a less sensible Impression upon their Spirits; but Miseries they have. Or, put the very best of their Case, and suppose their Joys to be without any Interruption, their Wishes without any Disappointment; yet, even thus, how long would their Happiness last? Alas, they vanish like a Dream, and all their Prosperity soon scatters like Smoke: Nay, not only their Enjoyments themselves, but the very Remembrance of them perish in a Moment. Their Life is but a Vapour; and Death will be sure to swallow up them and their Gayeties in speedy and perpetual Oblivion.

But this is putting the Case more favourably than it ever happens in reality; for even in this Life their Plenty and Pleasures are chequer'd with Misfortunes, and all their Sweets allay'd with a bitter Mixture of Cares and Fears, and inward Perplexities of Heart. The very Objects that minister Pleasure, bring Pain along with them too. And this is one great Argument, how wise a Providence the World is governed by, that the very Inordinacy of those Affections, which pursue the Pleasures of Sense so eagerly, should prove a Torment to the guilty Mind, and embase those very Pleasures they indulge. These very Pleasures too are short and fleeting, treacherous and deceitful, irregular and exorbitant, a Shame and Blemish to human Nature; and if Men be not sensible of this, that Ignorance proceeds from their own Inadvertency, Their Reason is intoxicated with present
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Delights, and their Minds blinded by vicious Habits, by which they degenerate into Brutes, stupidly abandon themselves to the transitory Pleasures of Sin and Lust, at the Expence of everlasting Pains ; and consult the Present Gratification of a vile mortal Body, with the Ruin of a precious and immortal Soul.

Go not thou therefore after their Excesses, nor place thy Happiness in serving, but rather in commanding, subduing, denying, mortifying thy own Inclinations. *Delight thou in the Lord,* Ps. xxxvii. *and he shall grant thee thy Heart's Desire.* For this Delight will teach thee, that the Happiness of Man consists in inward and spiritual Satisfactions, in the Contempt of this World and its empty Gayeties. And the less these are esteemed and affected, the greater and more ravishingly sweet shall those generous and noble Pleasures prove, which result from the Experience of God's Favour, and the substantial Comforts of a good Conscience.

But still these Comforts are not to be had, without much Labour, many Conflicts, and sharp Sufferings. For the corrupt Inclinations of Flesh and Blood, and the confirm'd Habits of Vice, create great Difficulties and ask Time and Pains to conquer. And conquer'd they may be, by introducing the contrary Habits of Virtue. The Flesh indeed will recoil, and think itself ill used ; but Reason and Religion will silence those Grumblings, and resolutely Perseverance in good Works vanquish all thy Reluctances. The subtle old Serpent will seduce and importune thee, but Prayer and good Thoughts drive the evil Spirit away ; and Fasting and holy Exercise, or constant lawfull Business, will keep him out. For he never enters so easily, so successfully, as when Idleness sets open the Door, and an empty Heart makes room for his wicked Suggestions.

C H A P. XIV.

*Obedience to Superiors; enforced by Christ's
Example.*

Christ.] **K** Now, my Son, that the Man who refuses Obedience, rejects the Grace, and excludes himself from the Favour of God; and by seeking his own private Advantage inordinately, breaks the Order, and obstructs the Good of the Publick. Disrespect and Contumacy to Superiors, is an infallible Mark of rebellious Appetites, and of Passions not reduced to the Governance of Reason and Religion. Submission therefore is of great Use for subduing the Flesh and its Lusts; and a good Preservative against Temptations. For the foreign Enemy will be more successfully opposed, when thy domestick one is first vanquished, and all quiet within. And Man himself is his own worst Enemy. Nor are his Circumstances ever more full of Danger, than when the sensitive raises Insurrections, and would dethrone the rational Soul. And in order to this bringing the inferior Faculties to Reason, an humble Opinion of yourself is necessary; for Partiality and Pride are at the bottom of all the Disorders in thy own Breast, and all the Disturbance given by unruly Men to Society, and good Government, of all Kinds.

And what such mighty Merit is there in this Submission? What Disparagement can it be thought to thee, who art Dust and Vileness, when thou rememberest, that I myself, the Almighty Majesty of Heaven, and the Lord of all the Universe; I, who created thee, and the whole World, out of Nothing, did yet condescend to a State of Subjection, and appeared in the very lowest, most servile, and despicable Form, for thy sake, who art Nothing? And why, but that so
thy

thy Pride might have no Pretence to support it, after so eminent a Pattern of Humility? Learn then, thou Wretch, to humble thyself; and like that Earth, of which thou art, be even content to be trampled upon, and trodden under Foot: Lay thyself, like the Streets, to the Feet of insulting Men who walk over thee, and never rest till thou hast broken thy own Perverseness, and art in a constant Readiness to comply with every just Command of all who have Authority over thee.

Till this be done, pursue thy Passions with remorseless Indignation, and spare them not, till the very last Remains of Pride be absolutely suppressed and killed in thy Heart. And if thou sometimes find ill Usage and Tyrannical Barbarity, yet still consider; thou art but a Man, and ought'st not to complain; nay, rather consider, that thou art a Sinner, in justice consigned over to Hell and Eternal Fire; and let the Anger of an offended God, which strictly is thy Portion and Desert, check thy Resentments of the Insolence and Injuries, the Reproachful Treatment, and unjustifiable Hardships, which Men may sometimes offer to thee. This Wrath of God thou hast provoked, but I in Mercy spared thee, I had Compassion on thy Soul, and ransomed it from Death by my own Blood. And canst thou think, that no Return is due for such Mercy? Yes; know, that I require thou shouldst be sensible of the astonishing Greatness of my Love, and shew that Sense by Gratitude and Humility; by a modest and respectfull Observance of my Representatives here below: and by not disdaining to suffer any Shame and Contempt, any injustice and Barbarity, when Providence and Duty call thee to it, which I, thy Master, thy God, did not grudge to undergo for thy Sake, whilst conversing in human Flesh upon Earth.

C H A P. XV.

*God's Judgments are to be consider'd, for our
Humiliation.*

Disciple.] **W**Hen thou, Lord utterest thy Voice in Judgments, my Joints are loosed, my Limbs quake for Fear; my very Soul is confounded, and trembles at thy Thunder. In the midst of these Horrors I begin to reflect, that the *Heavens themselves are not pure in thy sight*, and that even the *Angels thou hast charged with Folly*. If then those exalted Intellectual Spirits were not able to stand before thee, and kept not their first Estate, What must become of such a Wretch as I am? If even the Stars fell from the Firmament, how can Dust and Ashes hope to escape? They, who did eat Angels Food, degenerated from their primitive Excellence, and fed on Husks with Swine; how then should a Creature preserve its Innocence, whose very Original is impure?

This, Lord, convinces me; that there is no Holiness but what is derived from thee alone; no Wisdom without thy Governance; no Strength a sufficient Defence, if thou withdraw thy Gracious Protection; no Continnence or Abstemiousness effectual, except thou guard it; no Watchfulness against the Enemy, unless thy weakful Eyes keep all our Approaches, and repulse the Assaults of the Tempter. If thou cease to support us with thy mighty Hand, the Waves swallow us up; we sink and perish without thee, and with thee walk upon the Sea in Safety; Weak and unstable are our Resolutions, but thy Grace gives Strength and Perseverance. Cold and timorous are our Hearts, but thou warmest them with Zeal, and inspirest them with Courage. *Lift up then, Lord, our Hands that hang down,*

down, and our feeble Knees, that we faint not in this Spiritual Warfar; and enable those who can do nothing without thee, to conquer all Difficulties through thy Strength.

I know, O Lord, that if any good thing seem to be in me, yet even this deserves my meanest Opinion, and will in no degree justify my thinking otherwise of myself, than as a most vile and worthless Wretch. And therefore, when thy angry Justice afflicts me, it is my Duty, with the profoundest Humility, to lay my Mouth in the Dust, and meekly submit to thy correcting Hand. For though I cannot discover all the Reasons of thy Mysterious Judgments; yet this I find no Difficulty to discern, that I myself am nothing, and that I proceeded out of nothing. O the dark Abyss? in which I can find nothing relating to myself, but Vanity and Nothing. Where then is the Presumption, where the Pride, the lofty Conceit of my Worth and Virtue? Whither are all my vain Confidences, and towering Imaginations fled? Thy Judgments, Lord, have swept them away like a Torrent; and all are sunk in those unsearchable Depths. These shew me to myself, and justify the Prophet's Rebuke, *Isa. xiv.*
Shall the Clay exalt itself against the Potter *Jer. xviii.*
that fashioned it? Behold as the Clay is in
the Hands of the Potter, so is every Mortal Man in thy
Hand, O Lord.

And is it possible for that Soul to swell with Insolence and vain Conceit, which is duly sensible of thy Majesty, and submits to it, with that Lowliness and resigned Submission which thy Truth directs? No, no, Not all the Voices of Mankind, conspiring unanimously in his Praise, can blow him up to fond Conceits of his own Excellence, when once his Hopes and Heart are fixed on God. For he considers, that all these are but so many Copies of himself; frail and feeble, deceivable and perishing, Emptiness and Nothing.

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That they, as well as their Words, are only Air and Sound, and both will quickly vanish together; but God and his Truth remain for evermore. *Cease*
Isa. xi. *therefore from Man, for wherein is he to be*
accounted of? and endeavour to have Praise of Him,
who resisteth the Proud, but in his own due
1 Pet. iv. *time exalteth them, who humble themselves*
under his mighty Hand,

C H A P. XVI.

With what Reserves we ought to Pray.

christ.] **L**ET this, my Son, by the Language and Style of all thy Prayers : *Lord if it be thy Pleasure, grant me this Request ; If what I ask conduce to thy Glory, do thou be pleased to give and prosper it : Lord if Thou, to whom all Things and their Consequences are perfectly known, seest that this will be for my true Advantage, not only bestow it, but, with it, Grace to use it to thy Glory : But if thou seest it may prove hurtful to me do not only deny my Petitions, which proceed from Ignorance and Mistake ; but remove far from me the very Desire of that, which cannot be obtained without my Prejudice.*

This last is a very reasonable and expedient Request ; because many Desires, which seem, not innocent only, but even virtuous and wise, profitable and praise-worthy, in a Man's own Eyes, are yet neither inspired by God, nor agreeable to his Will : Nor is it easy to discern, whether one be acted by a good or evil Spirit ; or whether in the Matter of his Prayers, his own Inclination and private Respects do not determine him. And many a one, who hath fancied the Impulse of Divine Grace, and persuaded himself, that he hath been directed and acted by it all along

long, finds the Delusion out at last : And what he imputed to the Spirit of God, proves in the End a Suggestion of the Devil, or the eager Longing of his own vain Mind.

The surest Way then never to offend God in thy Desires, and to be accepted in thy Addresses to him, will be to temper all thy Inclinations with his Fear, and not so much as indulge a secret Wish, without such Reservations, as may testify an entire Submission to the Divine Disposal. And when those Wishes break out into Words, Men shall do well to conceive and present them in such Forms, as may express some Check upon themselves, and mighty Caution in restraining their Tongues from asking any Thing in a Peremptory Manner ; but leaving the Matter entirely to God's better Choice. As thus : *Lord thou knowest whether the having, or the being denied the Matter of my Petition, be most convenient ; and therefore all I beg is, that what thou seest most expedient, may be done ;* I ask, indeed, as is my Duty, but I presume not to prescribe to thy heavenly Wisdom. Give therefore, Lord such Things, and in such Measures, and at such Times, as thou seest fit. Deal with me as thou knowest is necessary : For that I am well assured is best for me, which is most agreeable to thy Will, and most conducive to thy Glory. Appoint me any Post, and use me as thy own : turn and change me, and my Fortune, at Pleasure : I only beg to be qualified for thy Dispensation, to use them rightly, and greatly to improve under them. For I am thy Servant, devoted to thee without the least Reserve : I desire not to live to myself, but to thee ; Oh ! that I might be enabled faithfully and worthily to perform that Homage and Duty, to all which my Heart is most freely and sincerely disposed.

C H A P. XVII

A Prayer for Grace to do the Will of God.

Disciple.] » **H**ear me, most merciful Saviour, I
 » humbly beseech thee, and let thy
 » Grace be ever present with thy weak unworthy Ser-
 » vant. I am not of myself able to do, or think any
 » Thing that is good. O! let thy Spirit assist my poor
 » Endeavours, vanquish the Temptations that so thick
 » beset me; fix my inconstant Mind, and follow me
 » all the Days of my Life, that I may persevere in
 » good Works unto the End. Regulate my Affecti-
 » ons and Desires, and confine them to such Objects
 » only, as are well-pleasing in thy Sight. Let thy
 » Will be the Guide and Measure of mine, and let
 » mine steadily conform to thy Pleasure. Remove
 » far from me all Inclinations and Aversions but such
 » as agree with those of the Blessed Jesus. Help me
 » to die daily to the World, and to the Things of the
 » World; and mortify my Vanity to that degree, that
 » even Shame and Contempt for thy Sake, may be
 » not only supportable, but welcome to me. Let all
 » my Hopes and Wishes center in Thee alone; and no-
 » thing appear desirable, in Comparison of a pure
 » Heart and peaceful Conscience. For thou, O Lord,
 » art my Peace, Thou my only Rest; in Thee alone
 » is Pleasure and true Satisfaction, and all without
 » Thee is Misery and Torment. Oh! grant me this
 » Blessed Retreat, this Happy Security; that I may
 » abandon all the false Appearances of Happiness here
 » below, and find soft Ease and sweet Repose in thy
 » Love and Favour, Thou True, Thou Chief, Thou
 » Eternal Good, of pious Souls,

C H A P. XVIII.

God is our only Comfort in Trouble.

Disciple.] **W**Hatever Comforts and Happiness I propose, This is not the Time, and Place of enjoying them, but I expect that Blessed Fruition in another State. For what would it avail, could I attain the utmost Delights the World can afford, when a very short Space must of Necessity put a Period to them? Do not then mistake thy Happiness, my Soul; for these Things are not, cannot be, thy Rest. The Fulness of Joy and undisturbed Pleasure is no where to be found, save in God only: He is the Comforter of the Afflicted, He the Wealth of the Poor, He the Support and Strength of the Weak, He the Glory and great Reward of the Humble.

Nor let it disturb thy Peace, or discourage thy Hope, that thou canst not yet aspire to thy promised Felicity. For God is faithful and cannot Lie. Only wait his own Time patiently, and thou shalt not fail of his Mercy, and an abundant Recompence of thy Faith and patient Trust in due Season. But if this Delay draw off thy Affections to present Comforts, and abate thy Zeal for future and distant Rewards, thou shalt desire Earthly Blessings, and not be filled; and at the same Time shalt lose those heavenly and Eternal Joys, which alone can satisfy, and make thee happy. Use then these Temporal Things, but *love* none but the Things that are Eternal. The present were not design'd for Enjoyment, but for Necessity and Convenience. Thy Nature is not cut out for them, nor is it in their Power to make thee perfect; tho' all this mortal State is capable of, were united together for that purpose. For God alone is a Good, large enough to fill the Desires of an immortal Soul; He only is proportion'd to thy

thy Wants and noble Faculties : and the Happiness to be met with in him; is not transitory, imperfect Thing, which the Children of this Generation fondly Cover and Admire; but that exquisite, that infinite and inward Delight, of which the Pure in Heart, and Spiritual Persons receive some sweet Foretastes and Pledges, by having their Conversation in Heaven, while they themselves are upon Earth. For Man is vain, and all his Comforts like him; Empty and unsatisfactory, false and fleeting, swift in decay, and of short continuance: But those from God resemble the Perfections of their Author, Spiritual and True; Immutable and Eternal. A truly pious Soul can never be destitute, because he constantly bears his Happiness about him, even the Blessed Jesus, the Divine Comforter; and, when bereft of all besides, can thus converse with him in the profoundest Solitude.

Blessed be thy Mercy, O dearest Jesus! Blessed be thy cheering Presence! O let me never be deprived of this inestimable Bliss. While I have this Consolation within, I feel no Want of Earthly Enjoyments: For this supplies, exceeds them all. Oh! let me thankfully rejoice in thy Favour, and the Light of thy Countenance lifted up upon me! Or, if at any time thou withdraw those bright Beams, and interpose a Cloud of Sorrow; yet even then preserve me from sad Distrust, and let the Consideration of thy Will, which is always best, be my Support in my blackest and most Melancholy Circumstances. Let me not cast away my Hope and Confidence, because thou hidest thy Face for a Season; but help me to discern the great Wisdom and Benefit of such trying Dispensations, and to support my Faith with the Prospect of that Reward, which is laid up in Heaven for those, upon whom Patience hath its perfect Work. For thou, O Lord, art Gracious and

Psal. ciii.

Merciful, and though we perpetually offend and provoke thee, yet wilt thou not al-

ways

ways be chiding, nor keep thy Anger for ever; but wilt turn again, and in much Compassion quicken thy Suffering Servants, that they may rejoice in thee, and triumph over their Calamities.

C H A P. XIX.

Of casting our Care upon G O D.

Christ.] MY Son, be content, that I should dispose of Thee and all thy Affairs, as Divine Wisdom sees fit; for I best know what is convenient for thee. Thou judgest rashly, and art liable to human Frailties. Sense and present Satisfaction blind thy Eyes, and byass thy Reason; but Christians, who should walk by Faith, and not by Sight, must not be govern'd by the same Measures, which common Men make use of, in distinguishing Good and Evil Accidents.

Disciple.] Lord, I acknowledge my Infirmary; and am sensible, that thy Care and Concern for me is more prudent, more tender, than that I have for my own self. And he hath made but small Progress in the School of Christ, whose weak Faith is still to learn that Lesson, of being satisfied with all thy Dispensations, and casting his Care upon thee. All therefore that I beg, is the establishing my Heart in the way of thy Commandments; and, so long as I swerve not from Truth and Righteousness, secure my Soul, and, for the rest do thy Pleasure. For thou art Wise, and Just, and Good; and such, I am sure, are all the Methods of thy Providence; Tho' Human Understandings may not distinctly perceive, nor be able to account for the Reasons of them. If therefore thou condemn me to Darkness and Affliction, I will praise and

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thank

thank thee for thy deserved Correction, even in the midst of my Trouble? Or, if thou spare the Rod, and make my Darknes to be Light, I will then thankfully receive the Blessing, and magnify the Favour which I cannot deserve.

Christ.] This is indeed, my Son, the Disposition and Deportment besitting the Character of my Faithful Children. And all, who profess to walk with me in Piety and Virtue, must bring themselves to a Soul so even, so resign'd, that Suffering and Joy, Poverty or Riches, may be entertain'd alike. The One, without Murmuring or Complaint; the Other, without the least Pride or Change of Temper. For both are equally the Appointment of My Providence, and, as such, should be met with Chearfulness and perfect Content,

Disciple.] Lord, I am willing to endure whatever thou art pleased to lay upon me. I do desire to receive Good and Evil, the Sweet and Bitter, the Comforts and the Crosses of this Life, with the very same Resentments of Mind. Nay, not only to receive, but to be thankful for both, since both come from thy own Hand, which cannot err in ordaining all my Events. This only I implore, that in all Changes of Condition, thou would'st in thy Mercy preserve me from Sin: For, while I keep my Innocence, and continue in thy Love, not Calamity, nor Death, nor Hell itself, shall make me afraid. However thou may'st exercise my Patience, or frown upon me at present; yet so long as thou dost not cast me off for ever, not blot my Name out of thy Book of Life, I am above all Danger; and the utmost Powers, and Malice of Fortune, and Enemies, and Devils combined together, can never hurt me.

C H A P. XX.

Christ our Pattern of Patience in Affliction,

Christ.] MY Son, remember I came down from Heaven for thy Salvation ; I bore the Punishment due to Thee, and all the Miseries, to which Human Nature is exposed. I bore them, not by Constraint, but Choice, and urged by no Necessity, but that which powerful Love imposed upon me. And One great End, for which I condescended to do so, was to teach thee Patience by this Example ; and, that my willing Sufferings might dispose thee to submit to the necessary Incumbrances of thy present Condition, without Reluctance and Murmuring, Sorrow became familiar to me ; My constant Attendant from the Manger to the Cross ; for every Hour produced some fresh Instance of it. My Circumstances were low, and I contented myself with the Want of even the Necessaries of Life ; my Innocence was slandered, and daily Complaints and Reproaches were sounding in my Ears ; Shame and Contempt I entertain'd without Return or angry Resentment ; my good Deeds were repaid with Malice and Ingratitude, my Miracles blasphemed, and my Doctrine traduced and vilely misrepresented.

Disciple.] Yes, Lord, I read the Story of thy invincible Meekness with Wonder and Astonishment ; and cannot but infer from thence, that, since thou wert pleased to give such amazing Proofs of an entire Obedience to thy Heavenly Father's Will ; I, who am a wretched Sinner, and not only subject to these Miseries by the Condition of my Nature, but one, who have deserved them as Chastisements for my Transgressions, am much more obliged, with a most perfect Submission, to receive whatever thy Providence thinks fit to inflict ; and must by no means grumble at the

Weight, or the Continuance of any Burthen thou shalt lay upon me in the present World. If any Thing here seem heavy, yet it is rendred much easier and more supportable, by the Assistance of thy Grace, by the Contemplation of thy Example, and by the many Patterns of Constancy and Virtue, which thy now glorious Saints, but once afflicted Servants, who travelled the same rugged Journey of Life, have in all Ages set for my Imitation and Encouragement. I plainly see, under this Gospel-state, a mighty Support, which even thy own peculiar People wanted under the Old Law. For then the Way to Heaven was dark, and the Prospect at their Journey's End less glorious and inviting. Few then applied themselves with Zeal to seek a Future and Spiritual Kingdom ; nor could they do so with equal Encouragement, till thy Meritorious Death had opened an Entrance into the High and Holy Place. But how contentedly, how thankfully, ought I to tread in thy Blessed Steps, sustained by the Assurance of Eternal Rewards, and directed in the right Way by the

John xiv. Light of thy Doctrine ? For thou art the Way, the Truth and the Life ; Thy Afflictions have taught Me, and all Believers, that Tribulation is the Passage to thy Heavenly Kingdom ; and that the proper Method of attaining thy Crown, is being made a Partaker of thy Cross. Had'st thou not gone before us, who would have the Heart to follow ? Who could persevere in a Course of Sufferings ? Nay, though thou hast thus shewed us the Way, yet how loth, how backward are we to follow still ? And, if neither thy Miracles, nor they Precepts, thy wondrous Humiliation, nor they glorious Exaltation, can warm us into greater Zeal and Resolution, than by lamentable Experience we daily see and feel they do ; How wretchedly slothful, alas ! how cold, and motionless, should we have stood ; had not thy Grace and marvelous Condescension vouchsafed to grant us the Advantage

tage of so clear a Light, and the powerful Motive of so bright an Example ?

C H A P. XXI.

Of bearing Injuries ; and how we may judge of true Patience.

Christ.] CEASE thy Complaints, my Son, and, when Afflictions threaten to attack thee, call to remembrance what I endured for thy Sake ; Nay, not what I endured for thine only, but what so many brave and generous Saints have since courageously endured for mine. Alas ! thy Trials yet are small, nor hast thou resisted unto Blood, as I and They have done, Their Difficulties were greater, their Temptations sharper, their Sorrows more piercing, their Exercises more severe ; and yet in all these they were more than Conquerors. It will therefore be of great Service to the confirming thy Hope and Patience, if thou diligently compare thy very light, with their much heavier Burthen ; and reproach thyself for sinking under a Weight, which they wou'd scarce have felt. But, if thy own Load seem so unsupportable, and thou canst hardly be brought to think the Case of others so much more deplorable ; consider, whether this false Estimate do not proceed from partial Affection, Tenderness to thyself and a fretful Impatience, rather than from the true Nature and Reason of the Thing. For These corrupt Men's Judgments, and make them see their own and other Peoples Circumstances with very different Eyes. But be thy Ideas true or mistaken, yet still the greater and the less Calamities call equally for Submission and Constancy. And it is not the Degree or Measure, but the Author and the Consequence

of Suffering, which is the proper Motive to Patience,

Now the better thou art compos'd under any Trouble, the more commendable is thy Wisdom, and the larger will be thy Recompence. Nay, not only so, but the easier will be thy Lot too. For Consideration will reconcile thee to it, and Time and Experience make the Thing familiar. Nor matters it much, who are the immediate Instruments, or from what next Hand thy Afflictions come. For those are very Idle Pre-
 tences, which Men usually labour to cover their want of Temper withal: „ Had this been done by an Ene-
 „ my or a Stranger, I could have born it; but from
 „ a Friend, a Relation, one whom I have highly
 „ obliged, and have a Right to expect better Usage
 „ from, what Flesh can brook such Baseness and In-
 „ Gratitude? Had I given any just Occasion for that
 „ disparaging Report, it would never have vex'd me;
 „ but to be slander'd and abused, without any Ground,
 „ without the least Fault or Provocation of Mine,
 „ methinks 'tis very hard; The Thing itself I could
 „ away with; but the Person or the particular Cir-
 „ cumstances, put me out of all Patience, „ Alas!
 these are nice and frivolous Distinctions; such as are
 altogether foreign and impertinent to the Matter in
 Hand; and what the Virtue of Patience is no way concern'd in. For this takes Injuries and Affronts by the
 great, without entering into any particular Examination of their Nature and Quality, and peculiar Aggra-
 vations; nor does it at all regard the Person by whom
 it is exercised; but considers that Person only by whom
 it is to be crowned.

No Man hath yet arrived to a due Perfection in this Grace, who is not content with any kind of Trial, from any Hand whatsoever. The Differences of Friend or Foe, of Superior, Inferior, or Equal; of a good-natur'd and conscientious, or a wicked, perverse, vexa-
 tious Man, are of no consideration at all. But, let
 the

the Provocation be what it will, and come from whom it will, let it be offered but once, or repeated never so often, 'tis all alike. Because in all the over-ruling Hand of God is attended to ; and every Thing received, as ordained and originally inflicted by him ; and what proceeds from him is always good and sure to turn to Account. And, as nothing he appoints, tho' seemingly never so grievous, shall be to good Mens Disadvantage ; so nothing tho' never so slight and despicable in itself, when dutifully and decently entertained, shall be passed over unrewarded. Arm thyself therefore for Combat, and decline no Occasion of engaging that offers, if thou desire the Glory of the Conquest. Without Fighting thy Way through, there is no coming at the Crown. And they, who refuse to suffer with Christ, do in effect, and by necessary Consequence refuse to reign with him. Stand up then bravely to Afflictions, and quit thyself like a Man ; Repose and Happiness is what thou covetest, but these are only to be obtained by Labour. Victory and Triumph are the Things thou aimest at ; But who was ever yet so absurd, as to think of Triumphs without Enemies and Hardships, or of Conquering without a Battel ?

Disciple.] I acquiesce, dear Lord, in all thou say'st : nor will I indulge such vain Imaginations. But since even where the Spirit is most willing, the Flesh is miserably weak ; assist me, I beseech thee, that by thy Power and Strength I may be able to do, what by my own I cannot accomplish, and Nature is averse from so much as attempting. Thou knowest full well, how little I can bear ; how every Shock makes my feeble Heart give ground ; Lord, do thou support and confirm me, that Tribulation may appear, not only tolerable, but even desirable, in compliance with my Will and my Duty. For, what Regret soever Humanity may betray in these Cases, when Danger

approaches; In my own better Judgment, which considers Things in the Christian and Spiritual Sense, I am abundantly satisfied, how much the Harsher Dispensations of thy Providence conduce to my Soul's Advantage. And, tho' *no Chastisement for the present seems joyous but grievous*, yet my better Sense, when I think freely, convinces me of thy Wisdom and Mercy, and that it is *even good for me to be afflicted*.

C H A P. XXII.

The Infirmities and Miseries of our present State.

Disciple.] I Will confess my Unrighteousness unto the Lord, and bewail my Infirmities before him. For every trivial Accident casts me down, and I am often overwhelm'd with Sorrow, upon Occasions which my calmer Thoughts abundantly convince me, deserve rather my Contempt, than my serious Concern. Sometimes I see and condemn my own Folly; and mighty Resolutions I make, how bravely I will behave myself for the Time to come; and yet, upon the next Assault of some slight Misfortune, this imaginary Hero is beaten from his Post, and cannot stand the Shock of a very common Difficulty. The poorest and most dispicable Things are, I find, capable of becoming great and dangerous Temptations; And I, who at a distance defy them, yet, when brought to the Trial, feel, by sad Experience, upon how slippery Ground I stand.

This is indeed the wretched Condition of thy poor unstable Servant: But, Lord, do Thou, in much Compassion, look upon my Frailty, for thou knowest it more perfectly than I myself can. Stretch forth thy Hand, and draw me out of these deep

Psal. lxi.

deep Waters, and out of this Mire of Sin and Weakness, that I sink not in my Corruption. I cannot easily express the melancholy Reflections, the Shame and Confusion, the Indignation and sad Perplexity of Heart, which the Consciousness of my own Inability to resist Temptations, and the Inconstancy of my best and most vigorous Purposes create; ; and tho' my Will be not always vanquished, nor do I (blessed be God) yield to every wicked Suggestion; yet the repeated Assaults of the Enemy disturb my Quiet, and I am weary of a Life, which consists of perpetual Hazard, and painful Conflicts with myself. The Wretchedness of my Condition is but to manifest: I need no other Argument to prove it, than that easy Access evil Thoughts find in my Breast; which, in despite of all my watchful Care, and most manful Struggles, are much sooner insinuated and received, than either driven out again, or prevented from entering.

Look down then, thou Almighty Rock of *Israel*, and Lover of Souls, and interpose thy Power and Protection; give seasonable Succour, and happy Success to my too fruitless Endeavours. Arm and guard me with Strength from above; and suffer not the old Man, the corrupt Inclinations of my Flesh, which refuses to be entirely subdued and brought to Reason, to usurp the Dominion over my better part. For this obstinate Rebel renews its Insurrections daily, and bids me Battel; calls me to Combats and hazardous Engagements, which must never, never end in perfect Peace and Safety, so long as this miserable State of Mortality endures. Most miserable indeed, since every Action and Accident of my Life involves me in fresh Dangers; since every Step I take is upon Snares and Precipices; since every Time and Place is thick beset with Troubles and Toils, with Treachery and Temptation, and a numerous Host of Enemies ready

to devour and swallow me up. For fatal uninterrupted Successions of Trials every Moment renew their Attacks ; and when I have happily vanquished many, and fondly promise myself a Truce, as many more immediately draw down upon me, and make fiercer and more furious Attempts upon some other Quarter, which I hoped had been sufficiently cover'd from their Approaches.

And can a Life, subject to such Surprizes and Hazards, embittered with so many Troubles and severe Trials, encumbered with so much Frailty and Corruption, be valued and mightily coveted ? Nay, can that deserve the very Name of Life, which naturally breeds Plagues and Diseases, and exposes us to such variety of Deaths ? Yet stupid Man hugs, and embraces, and esteems it his only Happiness ; expects Ease in the midst of Distraction, pursues Joys in a Valley of Tears, and vainly sets up for the boasted Perfection of Pleasure, in a Condition of inevitable Misery, and lingring, certain Pain. Sometimes indeed the tender Sense of some Afflictions cuts us to the Quick, and in our melancholy Moods we give the World hard Words, call it *deceitful, treacherous, and vain* ; but even they who rail at it most liberally, and profess to hate and despise it, cannot be prevailed with to be content to leave it. The Flesh and its Affections have still a Powerful Influence, and spur Men on to the Pursuit and Love of those very Enjoyments, which Reason and their own Experience have taught them, cannot be worth their Pains, nor in any degree answer their deluded Expectations. For we must observe, that our Love and Hatred of this World proceed from very different Causes and Principles. *The*

1 *Jahn* iii.

Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, engage our Affections ;

and these are ever present, and ever vehement with us. The Calamities and Grievs, and Pains we feel.

provoke our Hatred and Contempt, and represent Life a Burden and Misery; and these have their Intervals, and work upon us feebly and by Fits. The former too strike in with Inclination, and are assisted by Nature; the latter have no Influence upon us, but what their own Weight gives; all their Impressions are forcible and violent, heavy and painful, and such as we submit to, only because we cannot help it.

Thus Sense and sinful Pleasure get within us, and, which is very lamentable, debauch our Reason. The present Ticklings of the Body cheat the Mind, and vitiate our Palates to that degree, that, being prepossessed with a false Taste of worldly Sweets, we have no Relish left for that delicious Entertainment, with which God and Religion feed and feast the pure and heavenly-minded Soul. For, O! those happy Men, who have learnt to despise and abandon earthly things, and consecrated themselves entirely to God, by Mortification, Self-denial, and a steady Course of severe Virtue; these exalted Spirits know and feel the Truth of God and his Promises; they find unspeakable Charms and sensible Delights, in the voluntary Refusal of those Toys and Baits, which cannot be had with Satisfaction, nor coveted with Safety. They see, and despise, and pity, the Folly of abused Mankind; discover the lurking Frauds of the Tempter; and, that the imagined Happiness and boasted Pleasures of sensual and earthly Men, are only Snares and Dangers, Vanity and Cheat.

C H A P. XXIII.

Of placing all our Hope and Happiness in God.

Disciple.] **R**Epose thyself, my Soul, in God, upon all Occasions; and above all others Dependencies ; for he is the only sure Refuge, the eternal Rest of the Saints. Grant me thy Grace, O sweetest, kindest Saviour, to value, and love, and trust in thee above all Things. Make me to prize thee far before Health and Beauty, to desire thee more than Honour and Advancement; more than Riches and Power, more than Wit and Learning ; to rejoice in thee more than in Pleasure and Prosperity, more than in Reputation and Praise, more than in the largest Promises; the highest Deserts; the most exalted Gifts; the most transporting Joys, which thou canst impart, or my Heart when most enlarged, is able to receive. Let me admire thee above Angels, and Arch-Angels; and all the Host of Heaven ; above all Things visible and invisible, more than all that is, or can be, which is not thy own self.

For Thou, my God, art the best and most excellent Being ; in thee alone is Plenty and Fulness, sweet Refreshment, peaceful Comfort, and ravishing Delights ; the Perfection of Beauty and charming Graces; true Honour, and adorable Greatness ; in thee, as in its proper Center, all Good meets, and dwells, and hath, and doth, and will continue to abide, from, and to all Eternity. Give then thyself, my dearest Jesus ; for all thou givest, and all thou promisest to give besides, is poor and little, when compared with the Sight and Fruition of thee. And I have found, by long Experience, that all thy other Favours, nay, all Nature is too short and narrow to satisfy my Soul, whose unbounded Desires exalt and stretch

stretch themselves far beyynd all present Enjoyments, and can be filled, and rest contented, with nothing less than Thee.

O my beloved Lord, King of the Universe, knit me to thee with the Bands of an entire and holy Affection. Set me at Liberty from this Clog of Earth, and give me Wings of ardent Zeal and pure Devotion, that I may soar aloft, and take my Flight higher than Heaven itself, and find my Rest in thee. Oh! when will that happy Time come, when I shall be set at liberty from Sin and Corruption, from the Body and the World, and without Interruption, without Allay, and taste and feast upon the Sweetness of my God? When will the necessary Cares of this Life cease to distract me, and leave me Power and Leisure to indulge those Longings and Pleasures, which resigned and unbodied Spirits feel; when swallowed up in the Contemplation of thy divine Excellencies, and even raised above themselves, they know and love, and retire wholly into thee? At present I am oppressed with a Load of Infirmities and Corruptions, and often groan under the Sense of my heavy Burthen. The inward Joys, with which thy Grace supports me, are mingled and embased with Pains and Tears; which cloud, and darken, and deject my Mind; distract my Thoughts, obstruct my eagerest Wishes and Endeavours, and fasten me down to Earth and Misery, when I would fly to thy Embraces. I cannot in this Vale of Sorrow enjoy my Lord, my Love; but wait with Hope, and long sore for that happy Change, which shall translate me to the Spirits of just Men made Perfect, and render me Partaker of their Bliss. But let not, Lord, my Sufferings and Tears be lost; remember and compassionate my present Wretchedness, and grant my Sighs an easy and effectual Access into thy blessed Presence.

Thou, Lord, art the Brightness of thy Father's Glory; dart thy reviving Beams into my Soul; enlighten its dark Place, and scatter its Discomforts. To thee the very Thoughts and inmost Desires of every Heart are known; by thee the most Secret and silent Wishes are thoroughly understood. O hear me, when I speak in this Language, and pour out my Supplications in Sighs and Griefs, which Words cannot utter. Even when my Tongue lies still, my Thoughts are in motion; and my Heart within my Breast burns with inarticulate Ejaculations. "How long (say I to myself) how long will my Lord, my Bridegroom, delay his coming? O! that he would vouchsafe to enter under the Roof of his unworthy and afflicted Servant! O that he would stretch forth his almighty Hand, and deliver this Wretch, just ready to sink, out of all the Misery and Trouble, which surround, oppress, and are ready to devour him! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. For without thee, no Day, no Hour, is easy or comfortable; for thou art my Hope, my Joy, and all my worldly Plenty; but without thee is the very Extremity of Poverty and Want.

See how I lie in this Prison of the Flesh, fetter'd and bound up with the Chains of my Sin, till the Piti-fulness of thy great Mercy loose me, and the Light of thy Countenance, breaking into this darksome Dungeon, assure me of thy Favour and Friendship. "Let others cover and set their Affections upon such wretched Objects as deluded Sense thinks valuable; but as for me, I will love and long for nothing but thee, my God, alone; for thou, my God, alone art my Hope and Happiness; the only Stay of my present, and the only Bliss of my future and eternal State." Such is, and such shall ever be, my Address and fervent Prayer. Nor will I let thee go until thou bless me; till thou inspire new Life with

with thy Favour ; and dwell in, and converse familiarly with my Soul, by thy Spirit and gracious Presence.

Christ.] Behold me here, my Son, always attentive to thy Prayers, allways ready to extend the Comfort and Relief thou so zealously implorest. Thy Tears and fervent Desires; the Sorrows of thy perplexed Heart, and the strong Cries of a wounded Conscience, have pierced the Skies; and brought me down to thy speedy Succour and Comfort ; for I am ever nigh to such as be of an humble and contrite Spirit; and my Ears are always open to the Prayers of my suffering Servants.

Disciple.) I did indeed presume, in the anguish of my Soul, to beg what I am sensible I cannot deserve, and flee to thee, my God; for Help. And lo ! I am sincerely disposed to forsake all and follow thee. Nor will I ascribe to myself the Glory of so zealous, so resign'd a Temper ; for thou, Lord, didst work this good thing in me, and by thy preventing Grace, kindle and excite my very first Desires. I prayed, but thou preparedst my Heart. I sought thee, but it was by thy Impulse and Direction. And for this first Disposition, I return thee my most humble and unfeigned Thanks ; acknowledging it thy best, thy sole Gift, that I have been able so much as to think or intend any good thing. Since then the whole of what I do or desire well is thine, my Part shall be to cherish every holy Motion, to improve the early and happy Assistances of thy Grace, to submit myself without any Reserve to thy holy Guidance, and in the midst of the very best Performances thou qualifiest me for, constantly and humbly to remember my own Vileness and Impotence; For who, O Lord, is like unto thee ? Or what in Heaven or Earth, which hath, or boasts of, any Excellence, can be compared unto my God and Saviour ? Thy Works are just and

true, thy Precepts right and equitable, thy Providence great and glorious, and all things are governed by it, after a most wise and holy, and good, and wonderful manner. All Honour and Glory, and Praise, be therefore ascribed to thee, eternal Wisdom of thy eternal Father ; may Heaven and Earth, and all the Creatures, set forth thy Excellencies, and in this general Consort I will join ; my Mouth shall sing thy astonishing Works, thy great Glories ; and I will never cease to praise and adore my God while I have any Being,

C H A P. XXIV.

A Thanksgiving for God's Mercies.

Disciple.] **O** Pen thou the Eyes of my Understanding,
Psal. cxix. O Lord, that I may see and obey the
 wondrous things of thy Law. Give me the
 perfect Knowledge of thy Will, and possess me with
 a reverent and thankful Sense of all thy Goodness and
 Loving-kindness to me and to all Men ; that I may
 shew forth thy Praise, and publish thy Mercies. I
 know these are so numerous and great, that I can ne-
 ver magnify them worthily ; the least of them exceeds
 my Power to express ; and when I consider them, I
 am so far from any vain Pretence of Merit, that all
 my Thoughts are overpowered and lost in Wonder.
 For all our Advantages of Mind and Body, of Person
 and Fortune, those which are Endowments and Orna-
 ments of Nature, and those which exalt and supply the
 Defects of Nature, are all the Effects of thy Bounty
 and Beneficence ; *from whom every good*
James i. 17. *and perfect Gift cometh.*

Thou art the common Source, the universal Re-
 pository, from whence our Benefits are drawn down.
 Not to all in equal Proportions, it is true ; but, be
 the

the Measure less or more, 'tis still thy Distribution. He who receives most is indebted for the whole to thy Liberality ; and he who hath least, could not have had that little but from Thee. He, to whom thou hast dealt thy Blessings most plentifully, is not from that Dispensation to take an Estimate of himself ; his Plenty will not justify any Confidence or Boast of his own Merit, nor may he insult over his Brethren, or behave himself uncomely, and disesteem or despise those, from whom thy Mercies have distinguished him. For the Greatness of mens Deserts is most eminently discovered, by a Modest and Mean Opinion of themselves, Courtesy and Condescension to others, Gratitude and Devotion towards God. And the more they are sensible of their own Wants and unworthiness, the better they qualify themselves for fresh and greater Demonstrations of thy Love and Liberality. Again, the Man to whom thou hast distributed more sparingly, must not repine and be discouraged, nor fret and grudge the larger Portion of his wealthier Neighbour ; but keep his Eyes and Mind wholly intent upon thee, and admire the Freedom of thy Grace, which, as it cannot be obliged to any, so gives to all largely, and without partial Respect of Persons.

For thou art to be praised in all thy Gifts by every Man, because all comes from thee : And thou art Master of thy own Favours ; thou givest without Upbraiding, and with-holdest without Injustice : Thy Wisdom knows what Measures are proper and expedient for each Person ; and the Reasons, why one Man differs from another, lie not within the Compass of our Knowledge, but must be left entirely to thy Judgment, to determine the Fitness of them.

In this Persuasion, Lord, I readily acknowledge and adore thy Mercy, in suffering me to want many of those Advantages, which the Generality of Mankind set a mighty Value upon. Nay, I am satisfied, that

Men ought to be afflicted, and humble their Souls, with the Consideration of their own Wants and Unworthiness ; yet so, as not only not to give way to sad Despondencies and Distrust of thy Mercy ; but even from this very Subject to draw Matter of Comfort and Joy ; because thou hast so particularly declared thy Affection to the contrite and humble Souls, and given them Marks of more than ordinary Favour.

Such were those Apostles, so mean in their own and the World's Esteem, whom thou madest choice of for Witnesses of thy Truth, and Attendants upon thy Person. These very Heroes in the Christian Story, whom thou hast appointed Judges and Rulers of the whole World in Matters of Religion, were recommended to that High Promotion, by being Meek and Poor in Spirit, void of Guile, and mortified to the World ; patient in Suffering, content with Insolence, and barbarous Treatment ; and proud of nothing, but being thought worthy to endure Shame and Pain for the Name of Jesus. So distant from common Men, so singular were their Notions, which disposed them with Joy and Eagerness to embrace what others dread and detest, and shun with all their Industry and Might. The never-failing Spring of Joy and Comfort, which they who truly love and fear thee, and are thankful for thy Infinite Goodness, find within, flows from the constant Resignation of their Minds to thy Disposals, and the Reflections upon the Wise Eternal Purposes, which check their Proneness to Partiality and Discontent, and make every Dispensation of thy Providence welcome to them. They are abased with equal Satisfaction, as others are exalted : And regard not High or Low, Honourable or Despised, according to common Reputation ; but consider that their Station and Circumstances in the World are chosen and ordained by Thee, and cannot therefore but be good, nay, better than any other, because the Effect of thy
Di-

Divine Appointment, which always knows and chuses the best. Could we but once arrive at this considerate Temper of Mind; the different Accidents of Life would cease to be either much uneasy, or extravagantly pleasant. The violent Shocks upon our Passions would be effectually prevented; because thy Honour would take place above our own Appetites and mistaken Interests. Poverty and Shame would be acceptable, as coming from the same Hand with Riches and Honour. And even those Things which are most agreeable to the Relish and Inclinations of Human Nature, would please and comfort us more, with the Consideration of their being bestowed by Thee, the Author of all our Happiness; than upon the Account of any Advantages to be had from the Things themselves. The Zeal for thy Honour, in the Extremity of Distress, should support good Men more, and find greater Regard from them, than all the Wealth, or Glory, or other external Blessings, which thou at any time dost or canst confer, upon the most prosperous of the Sons of Men in this World. So small is the Consideration of the greatest Gift, in Comparison of the Wise, the Good, the Almighty Giver and Disposer of our Fortunes; who orders all Things for the best, and is, in all, our kindest Friend, and constant Benefactor.

C H A P. XXV.

The Things which make for Peace.

Christ.] **H**Earken to me, my Son, and I will inform thee, in the right Way to true Peace and perfect Liberty.

Disciple.] Be pleased, Lord, so to do; for such Instruction will prove both acceptable and profitable to me.

Christ.

Christ.] Make it thy Business rather to comply with the Desires and Commands of others, than to indulge thy own Inclinations. Chuse a moderate, nay, a low Fortune, rather than Greatness and Abundance. Be humble, obedient, and condescending in all thy Deportment. Let this be thy constant Wish and Prayer, That God would perform his Pleasure, and dispose of Thee and all thy Affairs, as to him seems most convenient. The Man that hath brought himself to this Temper and Spirit, be assured is in the ready Way to Peace of Mind, and true Content.

Disciple.] The Words my Lord hath spoken are few in Number, but full of Sense, and of very comprehensive Extent; and I can easily discern in this little Space the Grounds of great Perfection in Virtue. Did I but diligently observe these Rules, how happily would all excessive Concern, and violent Disorder at any Accidents of Human Life, be suppress'd, or quite prevented? And if at any time hereafter I find myself oppressed with immoderate Cares or Resentments, thy Wisdom hath taught me to discover the true Cause of my Trouble; and, that I suffer for neglecting to comply with this Doctrine. But such Compliance, Lord thou knowest, is not the Work of Nature and mere Reason: And therefore I implore the mighty Assistance of thy Grace, to which nothing is hard, for making those Improvements, which, in the present State of Corruption, are to Flesh and Blood impracticable. Nothing is more acceptable in thy Sight than the Conquest of our Infirmities, and bold Advances in Goodness. Put forth thy Hand then, and what thou hast taught me to know, enable me to Perform; That I may both approve my own Obedience, and (what without thee I cannot do) successfully pursue my own Happiness and Salvation.

C H A P. XXVI.

A Prayer against Evil Thoughts.

Disciple.] **G**O not far from me, O Lord my God make haste to help me: For Cor- *Psal. lxx.*
 rupt Imaginations are perpetually rising
 in my Breast, and innumerable Fears and Horrors close
 my Soul in on every side. The Sense of my hazardous
 Condition overwhelms me with Torment and deep Di-
 stress, while I see the Greatness of my Danger, and the
 Multitude of my Enemies, but know not how to de-
 cline the one, or to fight my Way thro' the other.

Christ.] Remember, Son my Promise; *I will go*
before thee, and make the crooked Places
strait; I will break in pieces the Gates of *Isa. xiv.*
Brass, and cut in under the Bars of Iron: And I will
give thee the Treasures of Darkeness, and hidden Riches of
secret Places.

Disciple.] Lord, since thou hast applied those Mysti-
 cal Words to my Comfort, let me, I beseech thee,
 Experimentally find the gracious Accomplishment of
 them in my own Person: And scatter all my dark and
 dismal, my vain and sinful Thoughts, by shedding the
 Light of thy Grace abroad into my Heart. For in the
 Extremity of Grief and Anguish, this is my Hope and
 only Support, to take Sanctuary in thy Goodness, to
 repose all my Confidence, and cast the Burthen of my
 Cares upon thee; to pour out my whole Soul before
 thee, and wait with Patience thy own good Time, for
 succouring me in, and giving me a happy Issue out of
 all my Afflictions.

C H A P. XXVII.

A Prayer for Spiritual Illumination.

Disciple.] SHOOT forth, O Blessed Jesus, the bright Beams of thy Heavenly and Eternal Light, that it may enlighten all the dark Corners of my Heart and effectually scatter every Cloud of Ignorance and Error, which now hang so thick over me. Call home my wandering Thoughts, and repulse the Temptations which furiously assault me. Fight thou my Battles, and subdue those fierce wild Beasts, those brutish Lusts, which range in this Desert, and are ever striving to devour me; that by thy Power the Wilderness may be turned into a Palace, and instead of the violent Cries and Howlings of raging Passions, no Sounds may be heard there, but Songs of Praise, Thou Lord, *who commandest the Winds and the Waves, and they obey thee*, silence the Storms within my Breast; say to that troubled Sea, *Be still*, and immediately there shall be *Peace* and a profound *Calm*. *Send out thy Light and thy Truth*, and warm this barren Soil; for such am I, till mellowed and impregnated by the Sun of Righteousness. Pour down thy Grace upon me plentifully, and water me with thy refreshing Moisture, which like seasonable Showers and gentle Dew, may fatten my Soul, and enable it to bring forth generous Fruit in great abundance. Raise and refine my Mind, press down with the Dross of earthly Desires, and draw my Affections up to Heaven and heavenly Objects; that the sweet Relish of that Bliss above may give me a disgust and loathing to all the nauseous Pleasures here below. Deliver, or rather snatch me away with a holy Violence, from all the perishing Comforts of this mortal State; for Thirst of Happiness I find is greater than

than any Creature can either quench, or in a good degree assuage. Unite me to thyself with inviolable Bands of Holy Love ; so shall my Soul be satisfied ; for thou alone canst answer all my Longings, and the whole World without Thee is trifle and emptiness, and nothing.

C H A P. XXVIII.

Against a Busy Inquisitive Temper.

Christ.] MY Son, have a care of indulging a curious Humour, and do not create to thyself unnecessary Troubles, by meddling with Matters of Persons, which are no part of thy Concern. For what is This or That to thee? *Fallow thou me.* What have you to do with the Virtues or Vices, the Conduct or the Indiscretions of others ; how they behave themselves, what Company they keep, or with what Discourse they entertain one another ? Why all this eager and intemperate Zeal to vindicate or accuse them ? You shall not answer for Their Miscarriages, nor be one whit the better for Their Excellencies. Your Words and Actions are the only Things you will be called to account for. Therefore look well to them, and beware, lest this busy and malicious Impertinence do not inflame that Reckoning. Trouble not yourself to turn Informer, and take not upon you to be a Judge. Leave that to me. I know every Man thoroughly, and nothing which is done under the Sun can escape my Observation. I am perfectly apprised of each Person's Condition, see every Action, nay, every Intention, every Design ; and not only what they do, but what they drive at. These Things are far removed out of your Sight ; and therefore you cannot judge truly, if
you

you may attempt it innocently. But know, once more, that Judgment is my Prerogative; and therefore it were Impudence and Usurpation in you to attempt it, If you were qualified to judge others. Study rather to be quiet; contain yourself within your own Business; and let the prying, censorious, the vain and intriguing World follow their own Divices. For all which they shall assuredly be one Day summoned to a severe Account; for all their Arts and specious Colours cannot impose upon Me. Engage not With them in the same Designs, nor let the empty Phantom of a great Reputation, the Pride of numerous and honourable Relations or Acquaintance, or the particular Intimacies and Friendships of celebrated Persons, engage your Time and Thoughts. These only serve to distract and perplex the Mind, and cheat you at last with fond Expectations; they lead you into a Mist, and there they leave you lost and bewildred. But I would shew thee the true Way, and communicate my Instructions freely, wert thou but at leisure to receive my Secrets, and careful to observe my Motions; by opening the Door when I knock, and watching all Opportunities of entertaining me in thy Heart.

C H A. P, XXIX.

Of Lasting Peace, and True Goodness.

Christ.] **T**HIS was my Promise to my Disciples heretofore, *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you; not as the World giveth, give I unto you.* But tho' Peace be in every Man's Wishes, yet the Qualifications and Predispositions, necessary for procuring and preserving it, are the Care of very few. My Peace takes up its dwel-

dwelling with the Meek and Humble. And the Peace of my Servants consists in steddy Patience, in attending diligently to my Words and following my Directions. Therefore, upon every Occasion, be sure to make a Conscience of what you do or say ; let the pleasing Me be your chief, your only Concern ; and the Fruition of Me your ultimate, your only End and Desire. Pass no rash Censure upon other Peoples Words or Actions, and do not affect to be a Man of Business or Secrets ; for this will be the best Expedient to make your Troubles few and light. I say, *few and light* ; for to escape Trouble altogether, and to have no Affliction at all in Mind, Body, or Estate, is not consistent with the Nature of your present Condition, but one of the Privileges reserved for Heaven and Immortality.

Do not therefore imagine, that you are then in perfect Peace, when you are sensible of no Calamity or Disturbance ; or, that a present freedom from Assaults is an Argument that you have no Enemy, and all is safe and well with you ; nor, when Things succeed according to your Heart's Desire, that this is a Proof of your extraordinary Virtue and Perfection ; nor, if your Zeal and Piety be fervent, and your Contemplations full of Delight, conclude yourself a particular Favourite of God. For these are foreign and deceitful Inferences, such as neither prove the Sincerity, nor the Degree and Perfection of any Man's Virtue. This is discovered by quite different Marks. The devoting and resigning yourself entirely to the Will of God ; not seeking your own, but his Glory in every thing you do ; considering all Events wisely, and receiving Prosperity and Adversity with Evenness of Temper ; and such a brave unshaken Perseverance in Goodness, as even when the Assistances and Encouragements of Grace are withdrawn for a Season, can resolutely go on, and harden itself to undergo yet sharper Trials

Trials with Constancy ; such Lowliness of Mind, as never puffs a Man up with an Opinion of his own Merit, but in the forest Distresses can find Matter of Praise and Thanks for that Mercy, which even then inflicts much less than he deserves to suffer ; and a firm Hope that God will not forsake his Servants ; this is the Way of Peace, the Way that leads to sure Consolation and Favour with God. And if, to not thinking highly of your own Performances, you can add that other Excellence, of despising yourself, and abhorring your own Vileness, then be assured your Peace is built upon so solid, so impregnable a Foundation, that mortal Man here on Earth is not capable of attaining to it in greater Perfection:

C H A P. XXX.

True Freedom of Mankind,

Disciple.] THIS is indeed the utmost Perfection Mortality can aspire after, to abandon all worldly Thoughts, and without Interruption keep the Mind upon the Business of the Soul, and heavenly Contemplations ; to pass thro' a Life thick set with Cares and Troubles, yet free and unconcerned. Provided still this Unconcernedness proceed not from Stupidity, Heaviness of Apprehension, or slothful Neglect ; but from a generous Liberty of Soul, by which the Man gets loose from all immoderate Desires, and too tender Love of earthly Enjoyments. This Faculty I earnestly covet and beg thee, O my God, to protect me against the Cares of the World, lest the Necessities of my Body employ me too anxiously ; and under that Pretence, my Affections be ensnared, and so I entangled in Multiplicity of Business,

to

to the Prejudice and Neglect of better and weightier Concerns ; or, lest I be enticed to Sin by the Pleasures of Sense, or discouraged from the steady Pursuit of Virtue and Heaven, by too tender and afflicting Re-sentments of any Calamities which may happen to me.

I speak not now of those vain Superfluities, which the deluded World so vehemently contend for ; but beg to be preserved in these Miseries and Dangers. For Miseries and Dangers I cannot but esteem the common and unavoidable Incumbrances of Life ; since these are heavy, and cling close about the Soul, and put it under such a strait Confinement, that it cannot freely obey the Dispositions it feels within, of getting above Concern for the World, and fixing its Desires and Endeavours upon spiritual Objects. Thou, O my God, art Sweetness inexpressible. But, that my Soul may truly relish thee, turn, I beseech thee, all my worldly Comforts into Bitterness ; lest they vitiate my Palate, and give a Disgust to heavenly things, by some deluding Charm of present pretended Good. O ! let not Flesh and Blood prevail in their Conflicts with the Spirit ; let not the World and its fading Glories cheat me into Ruin ; let not the subtil Enemy of Souls supplant me with his tempting Wiles. Give me Courage to resist, when called to the Combat ; Patience to endure, when called to Suffering ; Firmness of Mind to persist immovable in my Duty, when Temptations and evil Suggestions labour to seduce me. Exchange, if it be thy Will, the transitory and false Comforts of this World, for the Oil of true Gladness, the Assistances and sweet Satisfaction of thy blessed Spirit ; and instead of carnal Love and sensual Inclination, let the Love and Desire of thee be diffused thro' my whole Heart, and reign unrivall'd there.

Even Food and Raiment, and the Necessaries by which Life is sustained, are a Grievance and Obstruction to zealous and refined Souls. But what must be a Burthen, let me not make an Occasion of Sin ; by using the Creatures intemperately, by a luxurious Indulgence, or inordinate Appetite. Nature, I know, it is my Duty to support ; and therefore, entirely to refuse and neglect these Provisions, were Sin and foul Ingratitude. But to enlarge our Desires beyond the proper Uses of these Things, and let them loose upon Superfluity and Vanity, Delicacy and Delight ; this the Law of God hath most wisely forbidden ; because it were in effect to connive at all Licentiousness, by cherishing the Flesh, and animating and supporting it in Insolence and Rebellion against the Spirit. Between these two Extremes there lies a safe middle Way, in which I humbly implore the Guidance of thy Hand ; lest I decline from Virtue on either Side, and going astray after my own Inclination or unadvised Zeal, forsake my Path, and fly out beyond the Measures thou hast prescribed for me.

C H A P. XXXI.

Self-love the greatest Obstruction to Virtue and Happiness.

Christ.] SON, if thou aim at purchasing All, know that it is not to be bought at any Price less than by all. Earth must be barter'd for Heaven ; and where I give myself, I expect the whole Man in exchange. Think not therefore of any private Reserves of Interest or Pleasure, in Bar to my entire Possession ; for all the World cannot do thee greater Prejudice, than such Self-love. This sticks more close, while
other

other Things are loose, and at a Distance. And all things fasten upon thee, only according as the degree of thy own Love and Inclination for them gives Opportunity and Advantage. If your Mind and its Affections be pure, and sincere, and moderate, nothing shall have the Power to enslave you.

And what Pretence can you have for suffering them to be otherwise? For who would set his Love upon Things which cannot be obtained without Difficulty, oftentimes not with it; or if they be, cannot be enjoyed without Danger? Who would court Bonds and Captivity, and be fond of having that, which will obstruct his weightiest Concern, and rob him of his Liberty? Were these Considerations duly attended to, it must appear prodigious Folly; for any Man not to resign himself up entirely to Me; to waste his Strength with unprovable Vexations, and labour in the Fire for Vanity and create Troubles, which it is in his Power to avoid. Obey my Will then, and submit all to my Disposal, and then thou art out of the reach of the World and its Temptations. But if Interest and private Respect still govern in thy Heart, all thy Application will be in vain. Thou runnest away from Troubles in one place, to meet them in another; seeking Rest, but finding none, because thou always carriest thy Torment about thee. For even in thy most successful Attempts, there will be somewhat wanting to give thee compleat Satisfaction; and in thy most private Retirements thou wilt be dogged and haunted by some Crosses. The World and its Advantages can do thee no Service by being enjoyed, but by being slighted and despised. This is the Case, not of Riches only, but of Honour and Reputation too. For they also make themselves Wings, and fly away; and thou canst never be safe or Happy, but by mortifying thy Ambition and Vain-glory.

How many People please themselves with fond Imaginations of Ease and Leisure to be good in a Country or a College-Life ? But Cloisters and Desarts signify nothing, without the Zeal and Disposition of a Hermit. The Convenience of Place is very little ; and all its boasted Expectations vanish, except the Man be changed, as well as his Residence and Manner of Living. And this Change is not, cannot be effected, unless his Mind be fixed in Me alone, as the proper, the only Center of all its Affections and Desires. The Liberty Men enjoy otherwise is very short and unfaithful ; for fresh Occasions of Sin and Trouble will quickly offer themselves ; and then not only the old Inconveniences will return again, but new and greater, and such as are peculiar to that new State of Life upon which they have enter'd ; and thus their very Refuge becomes a fresh Temptation.

C H A P. XXXII.

A Prayer for purity of Heart, and heavenly Wisdom.

Disciple.]

E *Stablish me, Lord, with thy free Spirit,* that being strengthened in the inner Man, I may purge my Soul from all vain Anxiety, and banish idle Fears, and get over the Discouragement and distracting Troubles of the World. Let not the wild and impatient Desires of any thing here, tho' never so alluring and seemingly valuable, perplex my Thoughts, and draw me off from thee. Give me Grace to consider myself, and all below, as Things full of Vanity, and of very short Continuance. For such indeed are all Things under the Sun, *Vexation of Spirit, and altogether lighter than*
Vanity

Vanity itself; and he who constantly looks upon them as such, is the truly, the only wise Man.

Impart to me then, O my God, I beseech thee, that heavenly Wisdom, which may dispose me to seek thy Kingdom and thy Righteousness; to sell all for this one Pearl of great Price; and to esteem myself rich in no Treasure but thee; to *Matth. xiii.* love and delight in thee alone; to take Satisfaction in all things else in such degrees, and in Subordination to such Purposes only, as thou hast appointed; and to receive every Dispensation of Providence, with such a Spirit and Temper as becomes my Duty, and may render it servicable to the Ends for which thou sendest it. Grant me such Prudence and Conduct in all my Conversation, that I may decline and despise the Insinuations of Flatterers, and meekly receive the Contradiction and Reproaches of Gain-sayers, and Slanderers. For this is Wisdom indeed, when a Man is not carried about with every Blast of Air; but stops his Ears against the Syren's Chearms; and resolutely proceeds in a straight steady Course of Virtue, in despite of all the Subtily of those who labour to entice, or the Malice of them who would terrify and drive him from it.

C H A P. XXXIII.

*How a Christian ought to behave himself when
Men speak Evil of him.*

Christ.] **M**Y Son, if Detractors and Slanderers speak or think Ill of thee, let not this much disturb thee: The Provocation to Impatience and angry Resentments, which such ill Treatment usually ministers, will be much better employed against
N 2 thy

thy self. Take then this Hint of improving thy Humility, by reflecting how many things, which lie concealed from human Sight, thy own Mind is conscious of; and the more their wicked Malice labours to lessen thy Reputation, so much the less do thou appear in thy own Esteem. If all be well within, and thy Heart right with Me, the impertinent Censures of busy envious Men will make no very deep Impression. And when these reach thy Ears, instead of recriminating and Indignation. It will be wisely done to look up to Me, and not to be disordered at any Judgment, which Men shall take upon them to pronounce concerning thee. For why should thy Satisfaction be placed upon a thing, which makes thee not one whit the better or the worse? If they commend and cry thee up, thy real Merit is not the greater; and if they revile and run thee down, thy Innocence is not the less. Seek then true Honour and Satisfaction from Me, from Me alone; whose Sentence never swerves from Equity and Truth. And great shall thy Content and thy Quiet be, if thou neither solicitously court the Favour of Men, nor servilely fear their Censure and Displeasure. For, after all the Complaints of outward Accidents, the true original Ground of all Disquiet is within; for inordinate Affections and vain Fears, are the polluted Fountain from whence those bitter Streams of Discontent, and perplexed Thoughts, and every Confusion and Disorder of a troubled Mind, flow.

C H A P. XXXIV.

How God ought to be addressed to in Time of Adversity.

Disciple. **T**HE Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the Name of the Lord. *Job i. 21.* Yea, blessed be thy Name, for this very Calamity, with which thy Fatherly Wisdom and Affection hath now thought fit to chastise and try me. I cannot flee from the Scourge of thy Rod; but I will fly to thee for Succour; and beg, that thou would'st assist me with thy Patience, and turn all my Sufferings to my Soul's Advantage. I am indeed in Trouble; and cannot but confess the present Disorder, which this Misfortune gives me. But this is my own Infirmary; and *I know not what to pray for as I ought.* *Rom. viii. 16.* For what shall I say? *John xii.* Lord, save me from this Hour. No, dearest Father, thou hast not brought me to this Hour, had it not been for thy Glory, and my own Good. And therefore I will rather beg, that my Affliction may continue till thy gracious Purposes are accomplished in me; and, when thou seest me sufficiently humbled, that then and not before, thou would'st refresh, and raise, and deliver me out of it.

For my Deliverance, I am duly sensible, can come from no other Hand; since I myself am weak, and poor, and blind, and know not what is best, or what to do. Grant me then, blessed Lord a Rescue in thy own due Time; and in the mean while strengthen me with Patience, that by thy powerful Aid I may bear up against the sharpest Tribulations without Despondency or Distraction. *Not my Will, Lord, but thine be done,* shall be the constant Language of my Heart; My sinful Heart, which acknowledges thy

Mercy in the midst of Wrath, and sadly reflects, that thou hast punished me much less than my Offences deserve. O that this humble Sense of my own Guilt may work in me such quiet and contented Submission to thy Will, that I may neither unduly decline, nor unthankfully murmur at the Weight or the Length of my Sufferings, till thou see fit to compose this Storm, and restore to me the Comforts of thy Favour and indulgent Providence!

For if the Tempest still rage, this is not the Effect of Want of Power in thee to quiet it; but because a perfect Calm is not yet seasonable for me. Thy mighty Hand can lay it in a Moment: Thou canst abate its Fury, or thou canst protect and support me under its Violence and Extremity. I know thou canst; for thou hast taught me by my own Experience, and the Remembrance of thy former Mercies will not suffer me to doubt the Efficacy of thy Power. But, in proportion as my Grief and Burthen is greater, so much the sweeter and more refreshing let thy healing Virtue, and Spiritual Consolations be; and let me feel thy gracious Promise, *That thou wilt not suffer thy Servants to be tempted above that they are able, but wilt with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it.*

1 Cor. x. 12.

C H A P. XXXV.

How the Divine Assistances should be sought, and depended upon.

Christ.] I Am that Lord, my Son, who is the Stronghold of afflicted Men in the Time of Trouble, and in whom thou dost well to take Sanctuary, in all thy Distresses. But, if thy Comforts make not haste, thou dost thyself frequently obstruct

Nahum i.

obstruct and disappoint thy own Expectations, by deferring thy Prayers and by slowness to ask Relief. For Men generally try all other Comforts and Remedies first, and reserve Me for their last Refuge, in Times of such Extremity, when nothing will do them Service; and then my Honour is concerned, not only to defeat those Human Contrivances, in which they vainly trusted, but to defer my own Succours; and, by making them smart for their impious Neglect, compel them to acknowledge, that I am the Deliverer of them that trust in Me; and that, without me no Succours are strong, no Counsels wise, no Remedies successful. And if their Sufferings find some present Abatement, this only skins the Wound, but is no perfect Cure; and the Pain it asswages will return again with doubled Anguish and Rage, For I alone, who gave the Stroke, can heal it; and, as there is no Evil which the Lord hath not done, so neither is there any Deliverance which the Lord hath not wrought.

But, now that thy Applications are come up into my Ears, and thou hast cast thyself upon my Mercy, I will revive thy drooping Spirits, and thou shalt, after this dark dismal Storm, rejoice again in the Light of my Countenance. For I am ready, not only to restore thy former Happiness, but also to recompence thy past Pains and Patience, by plentiful Additions of more and greater Blessings. And let not any Adversity, tho' never so grievous, prevail upon thy Frailty to distrust my doing so. For, Can there any Thing be too hard for me? Or am I like deceitful Men, who sooth their Dependants up with Promises, which they never design to perform? Have I at any time broken my Word? Where then is thy Faith, where thy Courage? Bear bravely up, and discharge thy Duty. For, if thou fail not to qualify thyself for receiving them, Grace and Consolation shall certainly approach in due time. *If*
the

Heb. ii. the Lord tarry, yet wait for him, for he will surely come and heal thee. The Load,

which now oppresses thee, is only laid there, to try thy Strength and Virtue ; nor would it weigh thee down so low, if thy own Folly did not make it heavier, by heaping on Anxious Cares for the future upon thy present Sufferings. But this is to conspire against thyself, and turn thy own Tormentor.

Mat. vi. 34. Sufficient to each Day is the Evil thereof ; without charging it with additional Troubles, which no way belong to it. These are indeed impertinent and senseless at all times ; for, how absurd is it to exalt or deject on's self, by Hopes and Fears, and fond Representations of distant Good and Evil, which have not any Being in Nature, and probably may never be at all ? Dismiss these empty but painful Follies ; the mere Creatures of thy own sick Fancy. For such Delusions are a great Reproach upon Reason, and a greater yet upon Christianity ; when thy mean timorous Soul is mocked by such airy Phantoms, and so very easily led Captive by the Enemy's Suggestions, And such are these desponding or sanguine Thoughts of what will be hereafter. Whether it be or not, He matters not ; for his Business is to deceive and undo Men. And true or false Hopes and Terrors contribute equally to this Design. The Love of present Good, and Dread of approaching Evils, are Instruments of Ruin, employed by him, with wonderful Address ; and, so Ruin be but the Consequence, the Methods and Management of it are altogether indifferent to him.

Do not therefore suffer Fear to deject thee, but still maintain thy Christian Courage, and repose thy Confidence in my Mercy. I am often ready at hand, when thou supposest me at a distance ; and at those Times, when all is given for gone, Things are so far from desperate, that prosperous Events and most surprizing

Com.

Comforts are breaking in upon thee, like a glorious Sun from an astonishing Eclipse. 'Tis Rashness therefore to conclude Affairs in a lost Condition, because some Crosses have baulked your Expectations : Nor can either thy own Resentment of Misfortunes within, or the Violence of any Calamity without, give thee sufficient Grounds, from the terrible Face thy present Circumstances wear, to pronounce, That all Hope of Escape and better Days are past. Nay, which is the most sensible and most deplorable Case of any, if at the same time that I scourge thee with outward Calamities, thou feel the inward Supports of my Grace withdrawn, which should enable thee to bear the Rod ; Yet even so, think not thyself forsaken, or that I have utterly cast thee from my Presence. The Way to Heaven is set with Briars and Thorns ; and they, who arrive at the Kingdom, travel over craggy Rocks and comfortless Deserts : And more it is for their Advantage to have their Virtue awakened, and brightned, and brought to the Test, by the Smart of Adversity ; than that all Things should go smoothly on, without any manner of Let or Molestation.

The Heart of Man is deceitful, who can know it? Thy very self art often under very dangerous Mistakes about thy own Condition. Thou art ignorant what thou art, and much more ignorant what is fit for thee. But I, who have a perfect Understanding of both, see plainly, that it is proper and beneficial sometimes to be left to thyself ; that thus struggling to so little purpose with the Calamities that bear thee down, thou may'st be brought to a just and humble Sense of thy Infirmities ; that this Sense may check thy Vanity, and shew, that all thy Attempts which prove successful, are owing entirely to another Hand ; and thou art in truth nothing less than that mighty Man thou art apt to take thyself for. This makes my depriving thee of thy usual Comforts convenient ; but still 'tis in my Power

to restore and augment them to thee, when I see that convenient too.

Nor think me hard and unjust in these Dispensations ; for who shall forbid me to do what I will with my own ? I gave thee what thou couldst not claim ; and I take away what thou hast no right to keep. For

James i. 17. every good and perfect Gift is mine, and not

a Debt but a Favour. If then Affliction comes, remember 'tis of my sending ; and I, who laid the Cross, can both remove and recompence it : *I kill*

1 Sam. ii. and make alive, I bring down to the Grave.

and raise up from it : And, in the instant that I lay my Thunder by, and smile again, thy Heavens shall be changed into Joy unspeakable.

In all my Dealings I am just, in all am wise, and good ; and deserve not only thy Admiration, but even thy Thanks and Praise. Couldst thou but rightly comprehend my Methods, and the secret Reasons of them, thou wouldst drink up the bitter Potion with Joy ; with Joy, upon this very Consideration, that I do not spare thee to thy Hurt, but send Afflictions in pure Kindness to thee, when I foresee they will be for thy Advantage. Observe the Tenure of my gracious Promise to my best beloved Disciple : *As my Father*

John. xvi. loved me, even so have I loved you. But

both my Father's Love to Me, and Mine to Them, was express'd, not by false and transitory Joys, but by sharp and long Conflicts ; by being called, not to Honours, but to Contumelies and Disgrace ; not by indulging them in Ease and Sloth, but by inuring them to Trials and Difficulties ; by calling them, not to Rest and Peace, but to bring forth noble and generous Fruit with Patience. Remember well these Words my Son, and then thou canst not think much to drink of the Cup that I drank of so deeply, and to be baptized with the Baptism that I was baptized with. Thou canst not then despair, or think, that

God;

God, in afflicting thee, hath abandoned all Care and Concern for thy Benefit ; since even that tender, that unparallel'd, that unconceivable Affection with which he loved his own dear Son, hindred not his making that *very Captain of thy Salvation Perfect thro' Sufferings.* And what art thou ? *Heb. ii.*

What is the best of Men in comparison of Him ? What are thy Agonies and Trials, the very worst of thine, in comparison of His ?

C H A P. XXXVI.

Of Seeking God alone.

Disciple,] **T**HY Mercy, Lord, is great, which hath thus far assisted me ; but still, I feel I want a larger Portion of thy Grace, which may conduct me to such a State of Perfection, as may secure and set me at Liberty, from all the Obstructions which the Creatures lay in my way. For, so long as I retain an Affection or Concern for any Thing in this World, I find my Soul check'd and restrained in her Mountings to Thee and Heaven. How often do I make the Prophet's Wish my own, *O that I had Wings like a Dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest ?* *Psal. lv.* Lo then would I get me away far off, and remain at a distance from the World. Now what is more at ease, more abstracted from the World, than a true single-hearted Honesty ? What can boast of Freedom equal to his, who covets nothing upon Earth ? All created Beings should indeed be passed over, and left behind in this Flight ; and a Man must make a Stretch even beyond himself, and abandon his own Natural Inclinations and Defects, in Order to get a distinct View of the Creator, and those Perfections in him, to which
on

no Creature bears any Resemblance. Now this is the very Reason, why so few employ their Thoughts in Heavenly Contemplations with any sensible Delight; because when they attempt it, they do it unskilfully. For they bring those worldly Affections along with them, that damp and disgust them in the Undertaking.

It is not, I confess, an easy Matter; nay, 'tis not possible to Flesh and Blood, by its own Strength, thus to purge the Affections. Nothing less than a liberal and very powerful Inspiration of Divine Grace can thus exalt the Mind, and as it were carry the Man out of himself. But, till such Exaltation of the Soul hath disengaged one from all Temporal Interests, and fix'd down his Desires to that One Object worthy of them, God himself; all his Knowledge and imagined Excellencies are very little worth. For, whatever false Notions of Honour and Greatness Men may delude themselves with, yet still all They have poor and little Souls, and dote upon that which ought to be disdained, who allow any Thing, besides the Infinite and Eternal God, a very honourable Place in their Affections and Esteem. For All which is not God, is Vanity and Nothing, and ought to be nothing regarded. How vast a Difference is there between the Wisdom of a mortified pious Man, enlightened from above; and the pompous Learning of a profound and studious Divine? That knowledge, which descends from above, speaks its heavenly Original, by marvellous and noble Effects; and works a greater Change in the Man, a greater Improvement in profitable Knowledge, than all that Comprehension, which the best Capacities, and the most indefatigable Industry, can ever attain to.

We often hear very glorious Characters of Divine Contemplation, and the wonderful Delights and Transports attending it; and These a great many appear
very

very fond of. But when they have no regard to the necessary Preparations for it, their Minds are full of sensible Ideas, and possessed with the Things of this Present World; and the subduing and mortifying their Desires and Passions is a Matter they take no Care about. And while their Affairs continue in this Posture, they are in no degree qualified for those Exercises of the Mind. Methinks it is a most unaccountable Folly, and argues, that Men forget what Spirit they are of when they call themselves Christians, *i. e.* spiritual Persons, that have solemnly renounced the World with its Vanities, and the Flesh, with its sinful Lusts; who profess to believe and to seek Happiness in a future State, and to place that Happiness in the Perfection of their Souls; and yet, in Reproach and Contradiction to those Professions, suffer Body and Sense to run away with them; lay out themselves entirely upon perishing and paltry Advantages, while the substantial and everlasting are wretchedly neglected, and their Souls so perfectly forgotten, that they scarce afford one serious Thought to their most important Concerns. Or, if at any time they set themselves to think, some Trifle presently interrupts and draws them off from any profitable Recollections. Nay, they themselves fly out, and are glad to be diverted from a severe Examination into their own State; which is sure, if diligently pursued, to present them with Objects of Shame and, Sorrow, such as will wound their Sight, and soon make them weary of this necessary Work, Thus we never trouble ourselves to observe which way our Inclinations are disposed, or whither they tend; nor do we seriously bewail the abominable Impurity of our Hearts, though there be nothing but Impurity there. *The Way of all Flesh is corrupt upon the Earth,* and the universal Corruption, *Gen. vi.* says the Scripture, brought a Flood to destroy Mankind and every Creature. But whence, do we think, proceeds

proceeds such Corruption of Manners ? From the corrupt Affections of Men, no doubt. For if this Fountain be not sweet, the Action, which is but a Stream and Emanation from it, must of necessity be flat and bitter. For a pure Heart is the Ground-work of a holy Life ; and as naturally springs from it, as the Fruit from the Tree.

And herein we are much to blame, that so little Regard is had to the Dispositions of the Heart ; without which no true Judgment can ever be made, either of ourselves or others. But this, which is in truth of greatest Consequence, the very Point upon which a Man's whole Character turns, seems to be laid aside, as a thing too nice and speculative to be very curious in. We fix our Eyes upon the outward Action, consider what, or how much a Man hath done ; but with what Sincerity, with what Zeal, with what honest Intention he did it, or whether with none of all these Qualifications, we trouble not ourselves to enquire. So again, for the Estimate we make of Persons, thy are all foreign from the true and proper Foundation of Merit and Respect. The Riches, Valour, Beauty, Judgment, Wit, Eloquence, a good Style, or a sweet Voice, or a Knack of Management in Town or Country-Business, his Preferences, or his Profession, these we immediately take care to be informed of, and proportion our Value and Respects accordingly. But a Man's Humility and Poverty of Spirit, his Meekness and Patience, his Devotion and Piety, these are seldom mentioned in the Character, or recommended as Motives to induce Regard. Thus Nature and Grace have their different Prospects and Affections. The *former* looks at the outside of a Man, and rates him according to Things that are not his ; the *latter* places all within, and sets not at all by external Ornaments and Advantages. The former builds upon a
false

false Bottom, seeks herself what she values in others, and is oftentimes deceived and disappointed; the *latter* reposes her whole Hope and Love in God, and is never mistaken, never deluded by false Expectations.

C H A P. XXXVII.

Of Self-denial.

Christ.] **T**Hou canst not, Son, be entirely free, till thou hast attained to such a Mastery, as entirely to subdue and deny thyself. For covetous Persons, and Lovers of themselves, the lustful, and busy, and unsettled Men, the Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God, are all Slaves, vile and unprofitable Slaves, condemned to fruitless, endless Toil, seeking what they cannot find, and contriving what they cannot compass; or if they could, what they cannot long enjoy. For every thing which is not of God, is soon brought to nought. Observe this short, but certain Aphorism, *For sake all, and thou shalt find all.* Let go Desire, and thou shalt lay hold on Peace. Consider this Rule diligently, and transcribe it into thy Practice, for Practice will explain and prove it to thee.

Disciple.] This, Lord, is not the Work of a single Day, a Maxim not fitted for weak Capacities, but such as in one short Sentence contains the utmost Perfections of a pious and resigned Christian.

Christ.] And why, my Son, should that Perfection affright or discourage thee? Call up thy Zeal, aspire to true Greatness of Soul; and the nobler the Virtue is, the more eager and generous Resolution do thou express of attaining to it. Oh! that thou wert of that happy

happy Disposition, which utterly discards all narrow and selfish Considerations, and submits itself entirely to the Obedience of my Commands; and the Disposals of my Providence ! So should thy Person and thy Behaviour be acceptable to thy God ; so should'st thou enjoy great Satisfaction, and Peace in thy own Breast. Alas ! there are still many things which must be abandoned ; many, which till thou hast sacrificed to me, the Happiness thou aimest at can never be obtained. Buy therefore of me the pure refined Gold, of a heavenly and refined Disposition, for that shall make thee rich above all the Treasures of this World. Cast off the Wisdom of this Generation, and do not sooth thyself with their foolish Imaginations ; for they pursue Shadows, and take delight in Vanity and Nothing. Remember I have told thee, that the Things which are lightly esteemed, must be purchased at the Expence of those which this World esteems most Precious. For, what is more despised and mean in common Reputation, what more neglected and forgotten, than that true heavenly Wisdom ; which renounces all Merit of its own, and is content to be disregarded by the Men of this World ? This mortified and humble State of Mind is what indeed some People profess, and in Words commend ; but their Practice plainly condemns it, and gives the Lie to all their dissembled Praises.

Matth. xiii. And yet this Wisdom, poor and despicable as it appears to common Eyes, is that Pearl of great Price, for which all other Possessions are wisely given in exchange ; that hidden Treasure which is always like to continue hid, since it lies low, and few either do, or care to find it.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

The Changeableness of our Temper, and how to fix it.

Christ.] DO not, my Son, depend upon any present Disposition of Mind, with which thou feelest thyself affected, for this is fickle, and of short Duration. Variety and Change is what Men must be subject to, so long as they carry the Frailties of Flesh and Blood about them ; and all their Endeavours cannot so fix their Hearts, as to keep them constantly the same. Sometimes they find themselves disposed to Mirth, sometimes to Melancholy ; now they are even and serene, by and by all over Disorder and Confusion ; this Hour fervent and devout, the next lukewarm and cold ; studious and industrious to-day, slothful and unfit for Business to-morrow ; serious and grave, and thoughtful now ; and anon again gay and trifling, light as Air. But the truly wise Man, who is acted by the Spirit of God, gets above this changeable Region of the lower World. He suffers not himself to be carried about with every Blast and Impulse of Inconstancy, but settles upon the Basis of the one excellent End, which is always first and most in his Thoughts, the Port to which he makes, and the Compass by which he steers all his Designs and Actions. For by this Method it is very possible for a Man to continue unshaken and unmoved ; by any Gust of Inclination from within, or Accident from without. The natural Changeableness of human Affections, being yet more improved by Mens own voluntary Uncertainty, and proposing no constant End or Rule to themselves. Now that Intention which fixes upon God as its only End, will keep Men steady in their Purposes, and deliver them from
 being

being the Jest and Scorn of Fortune, And this in Scripture is stiled a *single Eye*, because it ever looks and aims but at one Object.

The more intent then that Eye is in this Prospect, the less diverted from its Mark, the firmer and more consistent Men are with themselves ; and the less Impression does any Change of Wind or Weather make upon such diligent and wise Pilots. But still infirmity prevails in most ; and if some Pleasure or Profit come betwixt, they retain so much Tenderneſs for themselves, and their temporal Advantages, as to be diverted from the same vigorous Pursuit of their first Prize, and allow this fresh one a Part at least of their Endeavours and Desires. They Love God but they would love the World too ; and in this State of divided Affections somewhat resemble the *John xii. 9.* *Jews* ; who, as the Evangelist observes, came to visit *Martha* and *Mary* at *Bethany*, not only that they might see and hear *Jesus*, but that they might satisfy their Curiosity in gazing upon *Lazarus*, whom he had raised from the Dead. It must therefore be your great Care and Business to compose this Distraction of Thought, to fix your Heart to one Purpose, to seek one Good, one End, so zealously, that nothing else may come into Competition or Partnership with it ; to look upon every thing which diverts you from, or cools you in this Pursuit, with an Eye of Contempt ; and constantly to keep your Hope, and Desire, and Love (which are the Spring and Guide of all your Actions) upon Me alone.

C H A P. XXXIX.

The Happiness of them that love God.

Disciple.] **I**N having God, I have all Things. *For whom can I have in Heaven but thee ? and what is there upon Earth that I can desire in comparison of thee ?* *Psal. lxxiii.* O sweet and comfortable Words ! But this is a Sweetness which one can taste, but they who love the Word of God, and *not the World, neither the things that be in the World.* *1 John ii. 15.* My God to me is All ; I need add no more. The Man of purified Understandings find this enough, and they of purified and heavenly Affections cannot repeat it too often. When thou art present, Affliction and Death are pleasant ; for in thy Favour is Life and Joy. When thou art absent, Life itself is a Burthen ; for thy Displeasure is worse than Death. Thou makest a merry Heart, a chearful Countenance ; in thee is abundance of Peace, and a continual Feast. Thou givest me right Notions of all Events, and rendrest every Accident a Matter of Joy and Praise to me. Without thee Prosperity itself is nauseous, and I loath my very Mercies. For nothing here below can please our Palate, unless thy Favour and Wisdom give it a grateful Relish. To him that feeds delightfully on thee, every bitter Morsel is sweet ; but they who want or slight that heavenly Entertainment, find the most delicious Dainties harsh and bitter.

They who are wise for the World and the Flesh, are most defective in the true and heavenly Wisdom. The carnal Wisdom ends in Guilt and Death, and the worldly Wisdom pursues Vanity and empty Pomp. But they who are wise indeed, conform themselves to thy Example, by a Contempt of all earthly Greatness;

and a vigorous Mortification of their sensual Appetites and Passions ; they disdain the Shadow, and lay hold on the Substance ; pass from Falshood to Truth, and from Body to Spirit. These are the Men who love and delight in God, and find no Satisfaction in the Creatures, farther than as they promote the Honour and serve the Purposes of the great Creator. The Joys they minister are subordinate and limited ; not inherent and natural, but by Reflection only ; and every thing is esteemed in proportion as it tends to its Maker's Use and Praise. So very unlike, so infinitely different, is the Pleasure we feel from the Creator and the Creature ; from the boundless Ocean of Eternity, and the narrow Tract of Time ; from the original self-existent Light, and those faint Beams shot down on Things here below.

Shine then, O Light everlasting, in comparison whereof all created Lights are but a less degree of Darkness. Convey thyself into my benighted Soul, purge and dispel the Clouds of Error there, purify my polluted Affections, cheer my Sadness, enliven my stupid Mind and all its Faculties, that I may rejoice and triumph, and bask in thy bright Beams. O ! when will that happy, that long wish'd for Hour approach, when I shall be filled with thy Lustre, and satisfied with thy Presence, and my God be my All in all ? For sure I am, till that blessed Time, my Joys must be imperfect. I feel, alas ! I feel and lament in myself, some Remains of the Old Man still. Scourged he is, but not entirely crucified ; wounded and bruised, but not quite dead. My Flesh, in despite of all my painful Labours, continues to lust against the Spirit, and a domestick War distracts and breaks the Peace and good Government of my Mind. This cannot exercise its just Dominion without perpetual Broils and tumultuous Insurrections. But, O thou, *who rulest the raging of the Sea, and stillest the Waves*

Waves thereof when they arise, come speedily to my Assistance, and quell this Storm. Scatter my Enemies that delight in Blood, and beat them down, O Lord, my Defence. Exert thy mighty Power, and get thee Honour by this Conquest. For thou, O Lord my God, art my only Hope and Helper; O save, or I perish.

C H A P. XL.

This Life a State of continual Temptation,

Christ.] DO not suppose, my Son, that in this World thou ever canst be in a Condition of absolute Safety. Dangers and Enemies await thee every where. Violence and Stratagems are perpetually employed for thy Ruin; and therefore the Weapons of thy spiritual Warfare must not be laid aside; for useful they are, and always necessary, during this State of Mortality. Cover thyself then with the Shield of Wisdom and Faith; for if thou expose thy Person without this Defence, the fiery Darts of the Wicked will quickly gaul and wound thee. And if Dexterity and Diligence in the Use of thy Arms be not animated by a Mind fixed entirely upon Me, and a vigorous Resolution of enduring the worst that can happen for my sake, the Engagement will be found too hot, and that Crown of the Blessed, which is the Reward of perseverance, can never belong to thee. Call up thy Courage then, and exert thy utmost Strength as Occasions of Combat shall offer. For to him that *Rev. ii.*
overcometh will I give the hidden Manna;
 but Misery and Destruction as the Portion of faint-hearted and feeble, slothful and sleeping Soldiers.

If then these are the Conditions of thy Obedience and Reward, think how absurd it is for them who indulge their Ease here, to expect Peace and Happiness hereafter. In one of the two States Enduring must be thy Lot ; and therefore tough Patience, and not soft Repose, is what thou shouldst labour for at present. For Rest and undisturbed Content have now no Place on Earth, nor can the greatest Affluence of worldly Good procure them ; but their Dwelling is in Heaven only, and they are peculiar to the Love and Fruition of God alone. In Obedience to his Will, you should contentedly undergo Labour and Toil, Trials and Troubles, Distress, and Anguish of Heart, Poverty and Want, Infirmities and Diseases, Injuries and Affronts, Scandal and Reproach, Disparagement and Disgrace, Punishment and Torture. These whet and brighten a Christian's Virtue, exercise and distinguish him. These Thorns are woven into Wreaths of Glory ; and to such faithful Servants I repay for their short Hardship an endless Recompence ; and for the Shame, which is presently forgotten, Laurels that never fade, Crowns always bright, and Honours firm and immortal as my own.

These are the Difficulties of the present State, which Men are to be upon their Guard against from without. But alas ! they must not Hope always to enjoy Peace and Satisfaction within, No, even the Saints of old, whose purer Innocence and eminent Virtues might better entitle them to this Tranquility, yet often found occasion to complain, that *their Heart was disquieted, their Spirit desolate, and an horrible Dread overwhelmed them.* Doubts and Scruples, Temptations and Fears, and cutting Perplexities of Hearts, are frequently the Lot of the most excellent Persons. But in all these Straits the Good behave themselves with Meekness and Patience, reposing their Confidence in God, and humbly distrusting themselves

selves, but supported with the Hopes of divine Grace and Favour, to comfort and assist them; and with the Consideration, that the *Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in them.* This was the Case of those glorious Saints, who are thy Patterns. And what Presence canst thou have to hope for that Joy in present, which they waited long for, and purchased at the Expence of sore Pains, and many Tears, and great Difficulties; and thought themselves well paid even thus? Wait then thy Master's Leisure, quit thyself manfully, banish Impatience and Distrust, persevere in Faith and good Works; grudge not to lay out Person, Life, All, for the Service and Glory of God; and doubt not but I will one Day abundantly reward, and in the mean time I will stand by thee to sustain and deliver thee in every Danger and Calamity.

C H A P. XLI.

Of despising the vain Censures of Men.

Christ.] **M**Y Son, repose thy Soul upon God, cast all thy Care there, and let it be thy great, thy only Concern, to approve thyself to Him. When this is done, a Man should not much regard what the World thinks of him, nor fear the Censures of others, while his own Conscience bears Testimony to his Piety and Innocence. To be ill thought of, is sometimes for thy good; it conforms thee to the Image of thy Saviour; and if thy Soul, like his, be meek and humble; if thou seek not thy own Glory, but his that sent thee, the Affliction will not be very grievous to be born. The Opinions of Men are as many and as different as their Persons; the

the greatest Diligence and most prudent Conduct can never please them all. And therefore
 1 Cor. xi. even St. *Paul* himself, than whom none
 ever laboured more to recommend his Actions to the
 Good Acceptance of the World; *he who became all
 things to all Men*, yet found it necessary to appeal to a
 higher Court, and declared it *a small thing*
 1 Cor. iv. *with him to be judged of Man's Judgment.*

He did his utmost to promote the Interest and Salvation of others; but even the utmost he could do, was not sufficient to skreen him from the wrongful Censures and perverse Misconstructions of Men. And therefore he removed his Cause, and referred the whole Matter to that God who knew his Integrity; and defended himself against the Calumnies and Reproaches of licentious Tongues with great Humility and invincible Patience. Sometimes he heard and passed their Slanders by in Silence; at other times he vindicated his own Innocence, and reprov'd the unreasonable Malice of his Accusers; not so much in Tenderness to his own Honour, as to prevent an Offence which might be taken from his forbearing to do so; and lest the Weak and Ignorant should conclude, that too obstinate a Silence was an Argument of his Guilt.

But what is there so terrible in the Condemnation of Man? For what indeed is Man? He lives and flourishes to-day, but to-morrow he is gone and his Place shall know him no more. Fear God then, and his Judgment, for this is omniscient and everlasting; and the more thou fearest Him, the less thou wilt be afraid of any but Him. Consider well what Hurt can come to thee by injurious and reproachful Treatment. Alas! they who accuse and blacken thee wrongfully, are much the greatest Sufferers by their own Malice and Injustice. Their Slander and Detraction can have no Influence, can make no Impression
 upon

upon the righteous Judge above. None to thy Prejudice, but a sad and fatal one to their own. For they cannot escape his Judgment, who hath declared, that they who *judge shall be judged; that they shall have Judgment without Mercy, who shew no Mercy; and that the same Measure they mete to others, he will measure to them* *Matth. vii. 1 Pet. iv.*

again. Keep God then always in thy Mind, and let go Quarrel and Contention, nor embroil thyself in Troubles and Differences, by being over solicitous in thy own Defence. If thou at present seem to be oppressed with Disgrace and ill Reports, which thou hast not deserved, bear thy Burthen contentedly. Blemish not thy Innocence by too deep Resentment; nor take off from the brightness of thy Crown; by Anger and Impatience, and Eagerness to right thyself. Reflect on Me, who once endured such Contradiction of obstinate and implacable Sinners, *Heb. xii-* and am now set down at the Right-hand of the Throne of God. Look up to Heaven, and remember, there is One who can make thy Innocence as clear as the Light, and thy Righteousness shine like the Sun at Noon-day. One, who will *Pf. xxxvii.* consider, not only thy Infamy and Wrong, but thy manner of bearing it; and the more meek, more injur'd thou hast been, the kinder and more bountiful Rewarder thou shalt be sure to find me.

C H A P. XLII.

A Christian must devote himself entirely to God before he can be happy.

Christ.] **L**ose thy Life, and thou shalt find it. For sake thyself, and thou shalt possess me. Esteem and have nothing, and thou shalt enjoy all things. For I will recompence thee with greater Treasures, and infinitely increase thy Store, when thou hast made over into my Hands all that thou hast and art.

Disciple.] How often, Lord, must I repeat this Gift ; and what are the Instances wherein I must forsake myself?

Christ.] All Times, my Son, are seasonable ; and every Action, every Accident of thy Life, furnishes a fresh and proper Occasion for doing it. I can admit of no Reserves, but expect thee stript of all, and nothing left which I have not a Title to. For how canst thou be mine, and I thine, except thy own Will be renounced in every thing, and no Property or Claim any longer remaining unconveyed over ? The Sooner thou executest this Deed, the better it will be for thee ; and the more full and express, the more frank and sincere thou art in it, the more favourable will be my Acceptance, and the more valuable Consideration shalt thou receive. Some indeed there are who pretend to give themselves, but the Conveyance is so clogged with Proviso's and Limitations, that the Title they make is worth nothing. They trust themselves to God by halves, and for making their best of the World at the same time. Others again do this without Exceptions ; but then in Difficulties and Temptations they repent of their Bargain and revoke the Grant. These Men make no considerable Improvement in Virtue, nor do they taste the Sweets of Piety, which consist

consist in a Mind at large from the World, and the Friendship and familiar Conversation of God. But such spiritual Advantages cannot, in the nature of the thing, be imparted to any whose Affections are not entirely agreeable, and inseparably united to mine. And this requires the total Resignation of a Man's self, and the daily offering of his whole *Spirit, and Soul, and Body, a holy, lively, and reasonable Sacrifice unto me*. I have often said it, and now repeat it once more, that *he who would receive All, must in exchange give All*. Do not then expect or call in any thing again, but give freely and chearfully, and depend solely upon me without Doubts or Demurs. Me thou shalt have in return, and with me perfect Freedom and saving Knowledge. Prevail with thyself to give up all, without Intent or Power of Revocation ; and pray earnestly that thou may'st gladly follow Christ in all his Sufferings and lowest State ; that thou may'st renounce all Property, and throw thyself naked into his Embraces ; that thou may'st die to the World at present, and by so doing live to me for ever. When this is done, all vain Imaginations will be banish'd ; Lust will disturb thee no more, nor Passions ruffle, nor anxious Cares perplex thee ; excessive Fears will run and hide their Head ; inordinate Desires will sicken and die ; Sorrow and Disquiet find no place ; and if Temptations try, yet can they not molest thee.

C H A P. XLIII.

*How to govern ones self in the Affairs of the
World.*

Christ.] **B**E sure, my Son, to take good heed that Business and Care never get within thee; but whatever Constraint they may lay upon thy Actions and outward Attendance, yet keep thy Mind always at its own disposal. Do Business, but be not a Slave to it; and remember, thy Prerogative is to govern, and not to serve the Things of the World. Thou art a *Hebrew*, of the spiritual Seed of *Abraham*; assert thy native Liberty. But why do I call thee a free-born Son of *Abraham*? thou art a great deal more, *translated out of Bondage into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God, Partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* Such Birth, such a Condition, should raise and enoble thy Soul, trample upon the present, and grasp at nothing less than Eternity, Cast only now and then a disdainful Glance upon this World, as a thing by the by; but keep thy Eye immovable, and directly fixed upon Heaven, as thy sure Prospect, thy main Concern. It will not become thy Quality to dwell upon Trifles, or subject thyself to Things temporal. These thou must make bend to thy Pleasure, submit and serve thy Occasions. For so their great Creator intended they should, who is the Author and Lover of Order, and would have every Work of his contain'd within its proper Post and Station.

If thou at any time art entangled in Difficulties, rely not upon human Prudence, nor trust the false Representations, with which thy Senses and worldly Affections, or the mistaken Judgment of others so disposed, would impose upon thee. But remember
Moses,

Moses, and go with him into the Tabernacle to ask Counsel of thy God. There *Exod xxxiii.* thou shalt often meet a proper Answer, have many thoughts seasonably suggested to thy Mind, and return wiser, both for this and the next World, than thou wert before. For *Moses* always took this Course in doubtful Cases and important Exigences : He made Prayer his Weapon and Refuge, by it he vanquished many Dangers, the Malice of Enemies and wicked Men escaped, detected their Devilish Designs, and retorted the Mischiefs they intended, back upon their own Heads. Now what that Tabernacle was to Him, thy Closet and thy Conscience are to Thee. Neglect not then by any means to consult this Oracle, and implore the Directions and Assistances of Divine Grace. For the ill Consequences of acting upon thy own head without these Precautions, are intimated to thee, by that Instance of *Joshua* and the *Israelites* : Who *Josh. ix.* are expressly said to have been deceived by the *Gibeonites*, to their great Prejudice ; because they gave too easy Credit to their flattering fair Pretences, and engaged in a League without first enquiring of the Lord.

C H A P. XLIV.

Against too great Eagerness in Business.

Christ.] MY Son, commit thy Affairs to my Care, and I will in due time bless them with a proper, and profitable Issue. But wait with Patience till that appointed time of mine, and do not anticipate the Methods of my Providence ; for I know how to convert every Delay to thy Advantage.

Disciple.] Lord, I most willingly commit my Concerns to thy Management, for all that little I am capable of is very insignificant. And therefore I cannot but wish, that this Sense, to how little Purpose all my own Pains and Contrivances are, might free me from anxious Thoughts concerning future Contingences, and dispose me calmly to acquiesce in thy wise and good Pleasure.

Christ.] Alas ! my Son, eager and greedy Men covet they know not what. An Object at a distance engages their Desires, while they see only the fair and glittering side ; but, upon closer and more distinct View, enjoyment undeceives them, and they grow sick, even of their own Desires. For their own Desires are various and mutable, and ever veering about to some fresh Object. It is therefore of some consequence, for a Man to forego his own Inclinations, even in Matters of no great Importance: But he who hath attained to the Faculty of doing this in any Case whatsoever, is truly free, and great above the Reach and Envy of Fortune and at the highest Pitch of Human Perfection. Yet even this Man will find his Virtues called to the Test : For the old Enemy of Souls is ever framing some Stratagem to undo good Men, and lies in Ambush Night and Day, to catch an Opportunity of ensnaring unwary Souls. Let then his Diligence provoke yours; and be not less assiduous to save than his to destroy you. For this

Matt. xxvi. is the Purport of thy Lord's Command?
Watch and Pray, that you enter not into Temptation.

C H A P. XLV.

In Man dwelleth no good Thing.

Disciple.] **L**ORD, what is Man, that thou
 art mindful of him, or the *Psal. viii.*

Son of Man, that thou visitest him? How can he deserve to be assisted by thy Grace, or succoured by thy Favour? What Right have I, so vile a Wretch, especially, to complain unto my God, if he withdraw his Presence, and leave me to myself? Or, if I beg and pray for Comforts, what have I to alledge in my own behalf? How can I take it ill, if he reject my Petitions? This I am sensible is all I ought to think, or can pretend to say, That I have Nothing, and am Nothing, and in my own Nature tend to and pursue after Vanity and Nothing. A miserable Creature, faint and feeble; incapable of so much as one Good Desire, till animated and strengthened by thee. Fickle and mutable, subject to Infirmities innumerable, and perpetual Decays; but Thou, my God, art *the same*, *Heb. xiii.* Yesterday, and to Day, and for ever; Ever happy, and just, and wise, and good, and ordering all things for the best, after the Counsel of thy Divine Will. Well were it, if I were but equally disposed to Good and Evil; but the corruption of my Nature, alas! preponderates strongly to Vanity and Vice. I easily fall from my own Stedfastness, and am carried about with every shifting Wind of Time, and Chance, and Passion.

And yet thus weak and veering as I am, thy helping Hand can Comfort and Confirm me, Thy powerful Grace, without any Human Aids, can work Wonders in me; can strengthen my Resolutions, scatter my Fears, and fill my Soul with Rest and sweet Content. If, when I thirst after higher Degrees of Vir-

true and Devotion, or if I fly to thee for Succour in Distress, when all other Succours fail me, (and all but thine will and must prove ineffectual) if then I could but abandon all other Hopes, and repose my whole Confidence in thee alone ; Then might I entertain some Expectations of thy Favour ; then wait with Joy, for the chearful Returns of Grace and Comfort from above. For all my Successes are thy free Gift, and I myself a despicable Wretch, not able to effect any good, not in a Condition to merit the least of all thy Mercies.

What therefore can I have to boast of, who, till I despise and go out of myself, am not so much as qualify'd to receive Assistance from Thee ? Or how can I desire the Applause and Admiration of Men ? What ! Shall I pretend to glory of Weakness, and Inconstancy, and Nothing ? This were a vanity beyond Example, an Extravagance beyond Imagination. How foolish and absurd, nay, how hurtful and destructive a Vice is Ambition, which, by undue Pursuit of Honour, robs us of true Honour ; and affecting Favour with Men, incurs Punishment and Displeasure from God ? For he who labours to please himself, is sure at the same time to offend Thee ; and loses true substantial Virtue, by coveting empty Praise. For true Honour and Virtue consists in glorying, not in ourselves, but in Thee, O Lord ; in magnifying, not our own Attainments or Performances, but thy free Grace ; and in loving and delighting in nothing, but so far only as may advance thy Honour.

Psal. cxv. Not unto Me, therefore. not unto Me, but unto thy Name be the Praise. May Men com-

mend and extol not my works, but thy Power, which inspired, produced and perfected them : And may this Commendation devolve so entirely upon thy Grace, that not the least part of it may fall upon my Concurrence with it. Far be it from me to arrogate any thing

thing to myself; for while I rejoice in Thee, I find nothing in myself to glory in, but my Infirmities. And in them I will gladly glory; because the greater my weakness is, the more visible and eminent is thy Strength, which is so conspicuously perfect in it. Let Unbelieving *Jews seek Honour one of another*; but I, who profess myself one of the *John v.*

Faithful, *will seek Honour which cometh from God only.* For, what is all the Fame, and Respect, and Greatness of this World, if put in the Balance of the Eternal Glory, but exquisite Folly, deceitful Bubble, and altogether lighter than Vanity itself? All Honour therefore, and Praise, all Might and Majesty be ascribed to thee, O blessed Trinity, my God, my Light, my Truth, my Succour and Defence, my Refuge and Comfort, for ever and ever. *Amen,*

C H A P. XLVI.

Of despising Worldly Honour.

Christ.] IF thou seest others grow great in Reputation and Preferment, while thou art overlooked and despised, let this, my Son, be no Concern to thee. Look up to Me and set thy Affections and Hopes in Heaven, and then the Neglect and Contempt of Men will give thee little Trouble.

Disciple.] Were it not, Lord, for the Blindness and Corruption of Nature, which makes me fond of Vanities and Joys, I should have juster Notions of these Matters. For he, who rightly understands himself, cannot but discern, that it is not in the Power of any Thing without, to do him real prejudice; and consequently, that he can have no reasonable Ground to complain of thy Providence, however it thinks fit to

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dispose

dispose of such Matters. The Consciousness of my own Sins convinces me; I have deserved, that all the Creatures should conspire and make War against me. To Me belongs Shame and Confusion, but to Thee only Honour and Praise is due. And thou hast taught me, that to bear Contempt, and Hatred, and barbarous Treatment, with Humility and Patience, is the only Method of attaining inward Peace, and true Satisfaction; The Virtue which must recommend me to thy Favour; the best Predisposition for Light and Grace; and the surest, closest Band of Union with thyself.

C H A P. XLVII.

Happiness is not to be had, by the Favour or Friendship of Men.

Christ.] **H**E that purposes to be Happy, by the Affection or Acquaintance of the best, the greatest Man alive, will always find his Mind unsettled and perplexed. For even the Best and Greatest are but Mortals; and the effectual Remedy against immoderate Concern for their being taken away from thee, will be to court the Favour of an Eternal and Immortal Friend. Now, the less Confidence any Man reposes in any Earthly Comfort, so much the more he ingratiates himself with God. The better he acquaints himself with his own Vileness and the less he is in his own Eyes, the higher he rises in God's Esteem. But they, who vainly fancy any thing that is good or meritorious in themselves, put an effectual Bar to Divine Grace. For this is given to the Humble, and the Spirit of God chuses the contrite Heart for the Place of his peculiar Residence. Would'st thou abandon

don Self-conceit, and wean thy Heart from all Fondness for the Creatures, it is not to be imagined what Comforts what overflowing Joys, I would infuse into thy Soul. But, while these employ thy Thoughts and Desires, thou art diverted from all higher Objects, and by being too intent upon his Works, lovest and forgettest the Almighty Maker. Learn then to subdue thy own Will, that thou may'st clearly understand, and readily comply with mine. For any other Object, tho' never so trifling and inconsiderable in its own Nature, yet, if unduly priz'd, and immoderately loved, corrupts the Mind, and checks its aspiring after the Chief, the only Good.

C H A P. XLVIII.

Against Vain, and Pompos Learning.

Christ.] DO not, my Son, suppose, that the Excellence of a Man consists in Subtilty of Wit, or Quaintness of Expression. For the Kingdom of God does not lie in Elegance of Speech, or Fineness of Parts, but in Innocence of Life and Good Works. Let my Words be thy Principal Study; for these awaken Attention, enlighten the Understanding, kindle a holy Zeal, provoke true Contrition, and heal the Wounds they make, with the Spiritual Balm of Grace and solid Comfort. Let not the growing Wiser and more Learned be the End thou propos'st to thyself in Reading; read, that thou may'st be qualify'd to practise, and let thy Knowledge be seen by subduing thy Vices and Passions. For this is Improvement indeed, and will turn to better Account, than the nicest and most distinguishing Skill, in all the Controversies and difficult Points, that ever employed

the Tongues and Pens of wrangling Logicians, Philosophers, and Divines. And when thou hast run thro' the whole Compass of Learning, yet all will turn at last upon one single Point ; and the whole Profit of thy Pains lies in a narrow room.

If thou wilt be knowing indeed, learn of Me ; for I am the only Master that teach Men Knowledge. I give more perfect, more Sublime Understanding to Babes, to the Humble and Sincere, than all the Celebrated Sons of Art have ever been able to do. And those whom I instruct grow truly wise, are presently enlightned and refined, and by an astonishing Proficiency in Virtue, outstrip all the admired Schemes of Morality. Most wretched are those Vain Men, who with infinite Toil and Time, lay themselves out upon the unprofitable Curiosities of Human Wisdom, and take no Pains to inform themselves in their Duty to Me. The Hour alas ! draws on apace ; when their Master Christ shall come with terrible Pomp, and call each Man to strict Account and sound every Conscience to the Bottom. Then *shall Jerusalem be searched with Candles* ; then shall the hidden Things of Darkeness be brought to Light ; and no Man's Eloquence or Subtilty of Arguing shall do him any Service, befor that All-seeing Juge. I raise the Meek, and Man of Mean Sense, in an Instant ; and teach him at once the Grounds of Eternal Truths, better than a Course of many Years spent in Laborious Study, and the most exquisite Methods of Schools and Universities. I bring Men to Right Apprehensions of Things, without any Noise of Words, without the Formality of Systems, or Vain Ostentations of Caviling Sophistry, or Regular Disputing. Of me alone Men learn to despise the World, to think Things present below their Pains and Care, to love and seek those that are Heavenly and Eternal, to decline Honours to bear Injuries and Affronts, to

trust

trust and hope in me alone, to wish for nothing but my Favour, *and to esteem all things but dross and dung, so they may win Christ.* *Psal. iii.*

Some Disciples of mine have made such wonderful Improvements under me, as even to speak Things above human Comprehension ; and grown wiser in Solitude Cloisters, than any Conversation of learned Men, or Volumes and Libraries never so carefully perused, could have made them. But this is not every Man's Case ; for I do not communicate to all alike. Some I instruct in common Matters, others in abstruse and peculiar Notions. And as the Measure and Quality of the Matter, so the Manner of imparting it is very different. To some I have shew'd myself in Figures and Parables, Dreams, and mystick Representations ; to others I have revealed the most important Secrets in the most clear intelligible Method. Books speak alike to all, but all are not qualified to be taught by them alike. But I instead of dead Letters presented to the outward Senses, perform my Business within ; I fill the Mind with Truth, suit myself to each Man's Genius and Capacity search every Corner of the Heart, understand their most retir'd Thoughts, inspire good Desires, promote and finish those Desires, by bringing them to Action ; and deal to every one the various Gifts of my Spirit in such Kinds and Proportions as I see most useful and seasonable.

C H A P. XLIX.

Of meddling with the World as little as may be.

Christ.] IN many Things, my Son, content thyself with being ignorant, and chuse to live as a Man dead while among the Living ; one whose Thoughts and Affections are crucified to all the World, and all the World to them. Many Things are to be overlook'd, as if you saw them not ; thy Mind drawn off from the distracting Variety of Objects, and fastened close down to the Things that make for thy Peace and Salvation. In controverted Points, it is generally much better to content one's self with avoiding erroneous Opinions, and their vicious Consequences, and leave others to abound in their own Sense (where their Difference from thee does not apparently hazard their Souls) than to engage in hot Disputes, and spend thy precious Hours in Wrangling and fierce Contention. And even in Disputes, not to be hot and pertinacious ; for if God and Truth be on thy side, and thou canst with Comfort appeal to thy Judge above, thy Concern will not be great for Victory and Approbation below.

Disciple.] Alas ! Lord, what a wretched Case is this World in ! how distant from this meek and abstracted Temper of Mind ! Trifling Loss is seriously lamented. A little sordid Gain engages Mens Time, and Labour, and Thoughts. The Day is too short for their vigorous Pursuits, and anxious Cares break their Sleep, while all their spiritual Concerns lie neglected and forgotten. Their Diligence and Study is determined to Matters of small or no Importance ; and the one Thing necessary is laid aside, as if it were not worth a single Thought. So vain is Man, so totally immersed in sensible Objects and worldly Cares ; and

so contentedly does he perish in Vanity and Vexation, unless thy Grace make him wiser, and raise his Mind to better and eternal Concerns,

C H A P. L.

Against a fond and easy Credulity.

Disciple.] **I** *Ord, be thou my Help in trouble, for vain is the help of man.* *Psal. cviii.*

How often have I failed of Succour and true Friendship, where I had most reason to expect it? How often found it where I entertained no such Expectations? So vain and uncertain is all Trust in Man, so entirely does the Safety of good Men depend upon thee alone. Blessed therefore, and for ever admired be that good Providence, which orders and disposes Events to thy impotent and fickle, thy ignorant and silly, thy deceitful and deceivable Creatures!

Who among all the Sons of Men ever behaved himself with so prudent Care and exact Circumspection, as not sometimes to be over-reach'd by Treachery and Trick, and involved in Difficulties and Troubles, which the most jealous Foresight knew not how to descry or suspect? But he who places no Confidence in human Subtilty, and rests in God alone, and acts with downright Honesty, and a good Conscience, is less subject to such Inconvenience than cunning and intriguing Men; or if he be surprized and imposed upon, yet is his Deliverance generally more speedy and effectual, and his Comforts in the mean while more sensible and supporting. For thou, Lord, never forsakest those utterly who put their Trust in thee. A faithful Friend, and such as will stand by us in Adversity and Want, is exceeding hard to be found; but thou

thou art always the same, and no Change of Circumstances can change thee, or abate thy Affection. Happy is the Soul that is built upon the Rock Christ; were this my Case, the Fear of the Malicious would not distract, nor the Calumnies of the Envious disturb me.

But who can foresee all future Inconveniences, or prevent all that he may foresee? And if the Ills we are aware of, and provide against, are so grievous to be born; how much more heavy will be those Wounds whose Smart and Terror are doubled by Surprize? We often blame ourselves for not being wiser, and have reason do condemn our too easy Credulity; that especially, which greedily assents to the Flatteries and Commendations of Men, and relies upon their mighty Professions of Friendship and Esteem. For tho' they call and think us Angels, yet we cannot but be conscious to ourselves that we are no better than Men, frail and wretched Men. Whom therefore shall I believe? whom indeed but thee, O Lord? for thou art Truth itself, incapable of deceiving, or of being deceived. But as for Men, they are all *Psal. cxvi.* Liars, weak and unconstant, frail and treacherous; especially in what they say, so exceeding fabulous and vain, that it is a Point of Prudence to suspend our Faith; and thou hast wisely taught us to beware of their false Insinuations. Thou hast forewarned us of their Treachery and Malice, told us, that a Man's *Enemies shall be those of* *Matth. xxiv.* *his own Kindred and Household*; and that when Men say, *Lo Christ is here, or lo, he is there, we ought not to believe them.* The Truth of these Predictions I have learned by sad Experience, and wish I may grow wiser at my own Expence.

Be sure (says one) you keep this private which I tell you; and yet that very Man in the next Company, divulges what he had imparted just before, under the
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the Seal of Secrecy From such unsincere Dealers as these I beg to be delivered, and from their treacherous Ways ; that I may neither come within their Power of betraying and abusing my Confidence, nor injure any who repose the like in me ; make me then, Lord, a rigid Observer of Truth, and religiously firm to my Word ; for what I cannot but resent when done to me, it never can become me to put upon any other Person. Silence indeed, and forbearing to concern on's self in the Affairs of our Neighbour, is not only a Virtue, but a Convenience and a Benefit. Caution in crediting, Reserve in speaking and revealing one's self to very few, are the best Securities both of Peace and a good Understanding with the World, and of the inward Peace of our own Minds. Endeavouring to approve ourselves to the Knower and Searcher of Hearts, and not suffering every Blast of idle Report or empty Profession, to carry us about, but guarding our Conversation carefully, and labouring to conform every Thought, Word and Action to the divine Will ; these are a good Man's Safety, and Satisfaction, and Wisdom. How sure and calm a Retreat does that Man make, who chuses to preserve thy Favour, by making an Escape from Pomp and Noise ; preferring thy Approbations before the loudest Fame and Applause, and willingly abandoning those painted Follies, whose glittering Outsides impose upon our Senses ; who prefers contrite Sorrow, severe Virtue, and solitary Devotion, before the showey Pleasures of the World, or that empty Admiration which Ambition and Vain-glory affect ? Praise is indeed the Consequence and Encouragement of Virtue, but it is sometimes so unseasonably applied, as to become its Bane and Corruption too. For the whole Life of Man is one continual Temptation, and we have a subtil Adversary to deal with, who slips no Advantage of undoing us. Our Praises he improves to his own Pur-

poses, by swelling us up with them into Pride and Self-conceit. And many Souls have perished by that Virtue, published and celebrated; which if unknown and unobserved, had come to mighty Perfection, and been infinitely happy by the Advantage of Secresy and Silence.

C H A P. LI.

Of trusting in God when Men speak Ill of us.

Christ.] **S**Tand fast, my Son, and be not terrified with the Shock of Calumny and Reproach, but let me be thy Refuge and sure Confidence. Alas! what are Words but empty Sounds, that break and scatter in the Air, and make no real Impression? If not Report alone, but thy own Conscience too reproach thee, bewail thy Guilt, and reform what hath been amiss. But if upon Examination thou find no ground of accusing thyself, strengthen thy Mind in Innocence, look upon this wrongful Judgment as a suffering for God's sake, and bear it accordingly with Patience and Contentedness. He expects that thou *shouldst resist even unto Blood*, when called *Heb, xii,* to it; but how will the Man be able to endure Wounds and Blows, who is not yet a Match for Words and Affronts? Enquire a little into the true grounds of such Impatience, and thou shalt find it a Simptom of a Soul sick and indisposed. For how can it be otherwise accounted for, than that thou art yet carnal, and retainest a greater regard for the Opinion of Men, than can be well consistent with a Person who hath renounced the World, and professes to dedicate himself entirely to God? Whence is Reproof so grating
and

and uneasy? Whence that solicitous Care to contrive Excuses? Whence that forward Zeal in thy own Vindications, if not from a Dread and Abhorrence of that Contempt, to which thy supposed Miscarriages would expose thee? Fondness of Honour and Reputation lies at the bottom, and inordinate Desire to recommend thyself to Man's Esteem. Which shews, thou art not yet so humble, so resigned, but that a Principle of Vanity lurks still within; nor is the World yet dead to thee, or thou to the World.

Attend diligently to my Instructions, and the Censures of ten thousand Men will not be able to disturb thee. Let them proceed in their Envy and Malice, and blacken thy Name after the most spiteful manner that Hell itself can practise or invent, yet what art thou the worse? Can all this change thy Person? Or hath thy Head one Hair the less for it? Do but compose thy Mind, and resolve to despise it, and all blows over. These Scandals vanish and fly away like Motes in the Sun, and are neither more nor less than what Resentment makes them. To be provoked with every scandalous Word, argues a Littleness of Soul, a want of due Regard for God; but the brave generous Mind, whose All is in God, and who refers himself entirely to his Judgment, is above the Terrors and Discouragements of Men, and lays no Stress upon their Notions of Things. For their Notions are frequently rash and false; they seldom do, and sometimes cannot enter into the real Merits of the Cause; but to Me all Hearts are open, and from my piercing Eyes no Secrets are hid. I know distinctly both in what Manner, and with what Intention, every thing is done. The Person who receives, and does the Wrong, are both under my Cognizance; and even the Wrong itself is done by my Permission; that by this means the Thoughts of many Hearts may be revealed. I shall not fail to make a just and clear Decision
between

between the Guilty and the Innocent, and call both to account hereafter, however I may think fit to try them in the mean while, and keep those Things in the dark at present, which then shall be notorious to all the World. And what Mistakes soever may prevail now, my Judgment will be according to Equity and Truth; and my Sentence, once pronounced, can never be reversed. Few indeed are capable of discerning the Justice of my Providence, in suffering innocent Men to be traduced, and their honest Actions misunderstood. But I do nothing without wise Reasons and neither am, nor can be mistaken in my Methods, how much soever short-sighted and inconsiderate Men are confounded about them.

Appeal then in all these Cases to my Determination, and let thy Matter rest so fully there, as not only to disregard what others think concerning thee, but even in some measure to distrust thy own Judgment concerning thyself. Consider, that I think many Things fit for my Servants, which they can by no means imagine convenient for themselves. This very Reflection preserves a good Man's Temper in every Accident of Life, because he knows that every Accident falls out thus by my Direction. This buoys his Spirits up against the Insults and Injuries of Calumny and Detraction, and keeps them from swelling into Pride and immoderate Joy, when his Innocence is cleared, and his Virtue commended. He knows that God sees not as Man sees; for Man judges according to outward and fallible Appearances, but God searches the Reins and the Heart, and judges righteous Judgment.

Psal. vii.

Disciple.] O Lord, thou righteous Judge strong and patient, who understandest the Frailty and the Wickedness of Men, be thou my strong Rock, my Trust and Defence. For even in my own Conscience I dare not be too confident, since
many

many things which to me are either unknown or forgotten, thou hast a perfect Knowledge, and exact Remembrance of. I ought therefore in all Reproofs and Reproaches to submit with Patience, even *though my Heart condemn me not*; because thou, who permittest these things, *art greater than my Heart and knowest all things.* Thus Reason and Religion both convince me, I ought to behave myself; but, if at any time Passion and Frailty have exceeded in too nice and tender a Sense of these Things, pardon, I beseech thee, what is past, and enable me to be more resigned for the time to come. Thy Mercy alone will avail me more than all my laboured Excuses; and Pardon is what I rather chuse, than the most confident Testimony of my own Conscience. For though I *should know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified, for he that judgeth me is the Lord*: The Lord, who will one Day bring to light the hidden things of dishonesty, even those, which have escaped the Committer's own Observation. And therefore, if thou Lord, *should'st be extreme to mark what is done amiss, no Flesh living could be justified in thy Sight.*

John iii.
I Cor. iv.
Pf. cxxx. 3.
Pfal. cxliii. 2.

C H A P. LII.

Nothing too much to suffer for Eternal Life.

Christ.] **L**ET not, my Son, thy Labours or Sufferings for Me and thy Duty, or any other sort of Hardship or Tribulation in this World, so far damp thy Courage, but that my Promise still should be a sure Anchor-hold of Hope; and this Reflection ever minister Comfort, that I am able to recompence thee, not only beyond what is reasonable to expect,

expect, but even impossible for thee to wish or imagine. Thy Toils will not continue very long, nor will thy Pain and Trouble always torment thee. Wait but a little longer, and look forward and see how glorious a Prospect opens itself: How swiftly the End of all thy Sufferings approaches; and how suddenly Sorrow and Tumult vanish away. Even Time itself is not of everlasting Continuance; but that which is bounded within so very narrow a Space, as this short Span of Life, cannot in any fair Computation be counted long or great. Proceed then in thy Duty with Vigor and undaunted Resolution; ply thy Work hard in my Vineyard, and fill the Station I have appointed thee to; thy Wages are certain and valuable, for I myself will be thy exceeding
Gen. xvii. great Reward.

Persist in Writing, in Reading, in Singing, Meditation, in Devout Prayer, in Fortitude and Patience. For the things prepar'd for them that love God, are richly worth these and greater Conflicts; all thou must do, all thou canst suffer, are in no degree worthy to be compared with them. The Day is coming, and fix'd in my unalterable Decree, adorn'd with the Triumphs of Joy and Peace; That mighty Revolution, when these alternate Successions of Day and Night shall cease; and everlasting uninterrupted Light shall shine for ever. There shall be Lustre infinite, Satisfaction unbroken, unconceivable, Rest Eternal, and above the Power of any future Danger. There shall then be no
Rom. vii. Place left for that melancholy Wish; O that thou would'st deliver me from the Body of this Death! no Occasion for that Complaint, *Wo is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Meshech, and to have my Habitation in this barren Wilderness.* For even the last Enemy shall be subdued, and Death itself destroyed, Salvation
Psal. cxx.
1 Cor. xv. then

then and Life shall reign for ever ; Sorrow and Anguish, Sighs and Tears shall flee away ; a Crown of Rejoycing put upon every Head, and thou shalt be happy in the sweet Society of *Saints and Angels, the Spirits of just Men made perfect, and the Assembly of the First-born.* Heb. xii.

Oh ! could'st thou now but see the Heavens open, and with the Ken of Mortal Eye behold the bright and everlasting Crowns of my Chosen ; Were thy Heart large enough to admit a just Idea of their Trophies and Glories, whom once the World despised, and thought not worthy to live upon the Earth ; thou then would'st gladly embrace their Sufferings and Reproaches, abandon all thy vain Desires of the Worldly Greatness, and disdain the perishing Pleasures of the present Life. Humility and Patience would then appear in all their native Beauties ; and even Affliction and Ignominy display such Charms, as must attract thy Love, and make thee esteem the Reproaches of Christ greater Treasures and Gain, than all the Majesty and Honour, and most celebrated Reputation, that a mortal State is capable of.

Attend then seriously to these important Truths, For they, if considered and believed in good earnest, will stop thy Mouth, and effectually silence all thy Complaints. For sure the Sufferings of a Moment cannot be thought too dear a Price for Eternal Happiness in exchange. Surely the Kingdom of God is no trifling Concern. And when the losing or attaining this lies before thee, nothing can be too much to prevent that Loss ; nothing a hard Bargain for that infinite Advantage. Grovel then upon the Earth no longer, but stand Erect, and lift thy Eyes and Heart to Heaven. See there the blessed Effects, the mighty Success, of all those sharp Conflicts, which my Saints, while in the Body, underwent ; the End of all their Trials and Adversities, their painful Severities and pious Labours

bours. These mortify'd afflicted Men once repured
 1 Cor. iv. the *Filth of the World, and the Off-scouring*
of all Things, the common Mark of Insolence and Malice, are now in perfect Joy ; their Sorrows swallowed up in transporting Bliss and Comfort ; their Dangers changed into secure Peace ; their Labours into Ease and sweet Repose ; their Persecutions and wrongful Accusations before the Bar of Men, into Thrones of Glory, where they sit and judge the World, and live, and rejoice, and reign with me for ever.

C H A P. LIII.

The Joys of Eternity, and Miseries of this present Life.

Disciple.] O Blessed Mansions of the Heavenly City ! O bright and glorious Day of Eternal Light and Bliss ! A Day that never declines ; a Sun that never sets, nor is obscured by any succeeding Night ; but a State always chearful, always fixed, and secured from Change and Sorrow, from Danger and Decay. How do I pant and thirst after that happy Hour, when this Blessed Morning shall dawn and shed its Beams, and with a wondrous Lustre put an end to all the Darknes and Miseries of Mortality ? It does indeed already shine in the Hearts and Hopes of these good Men, whose Conversations is even now in Heaven : But even theirs is but a distant Prospect, and such as, while they sojourn here, presents things only in a Glass. The Citizens and Inhabitants of those Blessed Regions see it with their naked Eye ; they feel and enjoy its Sweetness, and are all enlightened with its Rays ; while the distressed Sons of
Eye

Eve endure and groan under their Exile, and cannot but lament the Bitterness of this imperfect gloomy Day, which Men on Earth call Evil. A Day but short, and, which is worse, dismal and uncomfortable. For, who can worthily express the Pains, the Perplexities of Body and Soul, which are the necessary, the inseparable Incumbrances of Man's present Condition? A Condition, wherein he is polluted with so many Sins, entangled in so many Difficulties, beset with so many Misfortunes, oppress'd with so many Fears, distracted with so many Cares, disturbed and diverted from his main Concern by so many Impertinences, deluded with so many Vanities, confounded with so many Errors, wasted and worn out with so much Labour and Trouble; assaulted by Temptations, emasculated by Pleasures, and tormented with great Variety of Necessities and Want?

O! when will there be an end of this so complicated Misery? When may I hope to be enlarged and released from this Bondage of Sin? When shall my Thoughts and Desires center, and be for ever fixed, in Thee, my God, alone? When may I hope to attain true Joy in Thee, without any alloy of bodily Suffering, without any Distraction of Mind? When shall I rest in firm untroubled Peace? Peace from Accidents and Temptations without, Peace from Guilt and Misguiding, from the Sollicitations of Lust, and the Violence of Passion within? when shall I see my Jesus Face to Face, and contemplate the Beauties of his Kingdom and Glorious Godhead? When will my dearest Saviour be my All in All, and receive me to those blissful Habitations prepared for them that love him, and that are loved by him, before the Foundation of the World?

Behold! I am here desolate and poor, a Stranger and alone in an Enemy's Country; where Wars rage and never cease, and terrible Distresses come thick

and strong upon me every Day and Hour. Be thou my Comfort in this exiled and desolate Condition. Allwage my Pain, and incline thy Favour to thy Servant, whose parched and languishing Soul
Psal. cxlii. gaspeth unto thee as a thirsty Land. Thou only art able to do this ; For, what the mistaken World calls Comforts, are but so many fresh Additions to my Burden. I long most earnestly to enjoy, but cannot yet attain my Wish. Fain would I grasp and cling to heavenly things, but am detained and fastened down to Earth, by Vanities below, and unmortify'd Affections. My Mind labours to get above these ; but even, when the Spirit is willing I find the Flesh extremely weak, and my sensual, prevails over my better and heavenly Inclinations.

Thus am I, wretched Man, involved in a perpetual War, and live in Contradiction to myself ; my own Hindrance and Torment, moving different ways, and pursuing different ends and prospects, at one and the same time. How great is my Concern and Conflict, when I set my Mind to Meditate and Pray, and, in the midst of this Exercise, am interrupted by a Clutter of worldly and carnal Imaginations crowding in upon me ?
Go not far from me, O my God, neither cast away thy Servant in displeasure. Scatter these dark and gloomy Clouds, which intercept my Vision of thee, by the Brightness of thy Lightning ; of Thunder upon them
Psal. cxliv. from Heaven, cast out thine Arrows and discomfit them. Recollect my Broken and Scattered Thoughts, help me to forget the things of this World, to reject and despise, and effectually drive away all sinful Imaginations. Assist me, thou substantial Truth, and root me fast, that no Blast of Vanity may shake and unsettle my Heart. Diffuse thy Heavenly Sweetness through my Soul, and chase away all nauseous, unfavoury, and impure Affections, for these cannot stand before thee.

Particularly, dearest Lord, I implore thy Compassion upon my Infirmities ; and in thy Mercy impute not to me my many wandring Thoughts in Prayer. For there, I must confess, my Distractions are great and frequent ; and I am often least of all in that Place, where I stand or kneel ; Thus, while my Body is before thy Footstool, my Mind is carried away I know not whither. And this is a very melancholy Reflection, such as gives me occasion to suspect, and deeply bewail myself. Since where my Thoughts are, there properly and indeed am I ; and where my Thoughts frequent, and delight to dwell, there without doubt is the Object of my Affection and Concern ; and that, which either natural Disposition or long Custom renders most delightful, that to be sure is most familiar, and comes continually uppermost. All this I gather from that Observation, which thou, Eternal Truth, hast left us, that *where our Treasure is, there will our Heart be also.* *Matth. vi.*

This then is the Rule, by which I try and sound the Bent of my Heart ; If I love Heaven, the Thoughts of it will be frequent and pleasant to me. But if I love the World, the Effect of this will be, that I shall feel Excess of Joy in prosperous Events and be as immoderate in my Grief for those that are otherwise. If I love the Flesh, wanton and carnal Imaginations will often return upon me, and be entertained with Satisfaction ; but if I love the Spirit, I shall find in Spiritual Objects a grateful Relish, and dwell upon them with true Delight. For this my own Senses and Experience assure me, that what I love most, I am best pleased to be entertained with, greediest to hear and forwardest to talk of, most careful to remember, and to preserve deep and lasting Impressions of upon my Mind. And therefore though I cannot attain to it so fully as I wish and strive, yet I can plainly perceive, and do truly value and admire, the Happiness

of Them, who can abandon all, and stick to Thee alone ; that commit a holy Violence upon their natural Inclinations, Crucify the Flesh, and with a pure bright Zeal, and a clear Conscience, can offer holy, fervent Prayers, a spiritual and unblemish'd Sacrifice : Where All without are forbidden Entrance, and All within is composed. These Men, so firmly intent upon thee and their Devotions, are fit to praise thee with those Angels, whose refined Excellencies they so happily aspire after, and to whose blessed Society thou wilt one Day exalt and admit them.

C H A P. LIV.

*Of the Desire of Eternal Life, and the Happiness
of them who strive Manfully.*

Christ.] MY Son, when thou feelest thy Soul inflamed with an eager Desire of Eternal Happiness, and thinkest long to be released from this Prison of the Body, that thou may'st be blessed with a nearer and more distinct View, a perfect, full and uninterrupted Fruition, of my Brightness and Majesty ; set open all the Avenues of thy Soul, and greedily receive the holy Inspiration. Express thy humblest Thanks to God, and be duly sensible of his Goodness, who deals so bountifully with thee, visits thee with his Mercy, supports and strengthens thee with his Grace, and raises those Affections up to Heaven, which have a fatal innate Tendency to immerse thy Soul in Earth, and Flesh, and Sense. For, do not mistake the Matter, no Reasonings or Endeavours of thy own have Power to effect so good a Work, or to create those Spiritual Inclinations ; the Finger of God is in them, and they are owing to no
less

less noble a Cause, than the free and bountiful Donation of Divine Grace and Favour : The Design of which is to advance and exalt thy Virtues ; to make thee humble and modest, with Reflections upon the Strength of another made perfect in thy Weakness ; to fit thee for future Trials, and sorer Conflicts ; to engage thy Affections, and encourage thy Perseverance, in the faithful Service of so gracious, so good a Master.

Nor let thy Spirits be dejected, Son, if this be not done with all that Zeal, and intire Resignation of a Heart perfectly undivided, which thou could'st wish. For, as in common Fire there will always be some Smoke ; so in those holy Flames many Men are sincerely desirous of heavenly Things, who yet cannot quite divest themselves of Carnal Affections, nor be absolutely free from all Temptations. And therefore some other Prospects will often interpose as well as that of promoting God's Glory only, by those good Actions, for which the Assistances of his Grace are sought, and earnestly implored ; of this thy own Experience convinces thee by sundry Instances, in which thou seest no Reason to suspect thy own Integrity. Nor will all that be condemned at the last Day, which was attempted with a Mixture of some Desire to promote thy own Advantage. Only take care that this Desire prevail not so far, as to incline thee to prefer what may contribute to thy Profit or Delight, before those Things which will procure my Favour and Acceptance, and be for mine and for Religion's Honour. For with a wise considerate Christian, my Will takes place above his own Desires, or any the most inviting Object ; and if it reign not in his Heart alone, yet it always sits Supreme, and over-rules the rest. *I know all thy Desires, and thy Groanings are not hid from me.* Thou would'st this Instant be admitted into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God ; the blissful and eternal Mansions of thy heavenly Father's

Father's House are thy Longings and Delight ; and as
Pfal. xlii. *the Hart panteth after the Water-springs, so*
 doth thy Soul pant and thirst after me. But
 as yet thou art not ripe for these Joys ; that happy Hour
 is not come ; for this Life is the Time of Warfare, and
 Action, and Trial, and not of Rest, and Joy, and Tri-
 umph ; and thou must be content to wait with Patience,
 till the Kingdom of God shall come in Perfection.

The Condition of Mortals upon Earth, is that Ex-
 ercise and Discipline ; the Joys they feel are Comforts
 and Supports, not full and perfect Happiness ; they
 are given not to satisfy, but only to sustain them.
 And therefore receive them as they are, and use them
 to their proper Purposes ; that by them thy Constancy
 and Patience may be preserv'd from sinking under the
 weight of any Difficulties, which either the doing or
 suffering Things, to which Frail and Corrupt Nature
 is averse, may at any time expose thee. For the Change
 of a Man's self is a very laborious Undertaking, and
 yet this must be done. The Flesh with its Lusts must
 be crucified, a New Heart and a New Spirit introduced,
 many Things done, which offer Violence to a Man's
 Inclinations, many forgone and let alone, to which he
 is strongly disposed. Others thou shalt often observe
 crown'd with Success, when thy own no less painful
 Endeavours are defeated and disappointed ; Others
 look'd upon as Oracles, when thy better and wiser Ad-
 vice is disregarded and despised ! Others will suffer
 long, and at last obtain their Desire ; Thou, perhaps,
 tho' equally patient, equally fervent and zealous in thy
 Application, dismist with a Repulse ; Others be great
 in Fame or general Esteem, while thy more deserving
 Virtues are pass'd over in Silence ; Others carressed,
 prefer'd, trusted in Matters of Consequence, and look-
 ed upon as useful and necessary, while thou art re-
 puted a useless and insignificant Person. These mi-
 staken or partial Judgments of Men, will grate hard
 upon

upon Human Nature ; but even these will turn to good account, if born with Meekness, and Modesty, and Silence. For these are the very Methods by which God brings the Fidelity of his Servants to the Touch ; 'tis thus that he discovers, whether they have gained a Conquest over Nature and themselves. And no Sort of Mortification is of happier Consequence, than that which exposes Men to the Sight and Suffering of Things, to which their own Minds are most violently averse. Especially, when what they cannot but conceive most unfit, most absurd and odd, constrains them to go against their own Senses and submit to a higher Power, without any reserve to the private Judgment of their own Reason in the Case. This is indeed hard, and a Perfection of Submission not easy to be compass'd ; but, did Men well consider, how vast the Advantages of a Temper so resigned are at present, how glorious the Reward of it hereafter, and how quickly the Troubles it exposes them to will end in that Reward ; the Comforts of such Discipline would be sensible and great and they would even enjoy their Afflictions and Temptations, sustained with so pure, so bright a Prospect, of the mighty, the approaching Recompence.

For this short empty Pleasure, which now thou chusest for my Sake to decline, shall be compensated with solid and everlasting Joy in Heaven : And there thy largest Wishes shall be gratified. There shall be Plenty of every Thing that is good. Fruition perfect and secure, free from the least Allay of Fear, or Possibility of future Losses. Between thy Will and mine shall then be perfect Harmony ; no Opposition there, no Obstruction ; but every thing shall conspire to fulfil all thy Heart's Desire, and render thy Happiness as exquisite, as a Finite Nature is capable of. Thy present Ignominy, born with Patience, shall there be paid with brighter Glory ; thy Mourning Weeds exchanged for Robes

of Light and Joy ; and he who sits here in the lowest Place, shall there be seated on an Eternal Throne. Let it not then be grievous to thee, to humble and submit thyself to the capricious Humours of Men, with whom thou conversest in this World ; but rather so compose thy Mind, and order all thy Actions, as readily and meekly to comply with the Commands of thy Superiors, the Desire of thy Equals, the Requests of thy Inferiors, to do for all what lawfully thou mayest, and to endure patiently whatever they shall, but ought not, to do to thee. Let Vain Men pursue Vanity, leave them to their own Methods. Let them place their Glory and Happiness in such Objects, as their own mistaken Judgments shall determine them to. Let them admire, and above all Things covet celebrated Names, and popular Applause : But do thou place thy Excellence and Honour in the Contempt of thyself, thy Diligence in discharging my Commands, thy Zeal in seeking and advancing my Honour and Kingdom ; and let this be first and chief in thy Desires, *That whether thou live, thou may'st live unto the Lord ; or whether thou die, thou mayest die unto the Lord ; so that whether by Life or Death, the Lord Jesus may be magnified in thy Body.*

Rom. xiv.

Phil. i. 20.

C H A P. LV.

An Act of Resignation to God, in Time of Adversity.

Disciple.] **B**lessed be that Wisdom and Goodness, O holy Father, which performs all thy Will ; for what thy Will decrees, cannot be otherwise than good and wise. Give me Grace, I beseech thee,

thee, to rejoice, not in myself, or any other, but in Thee alone; for thou art my only Hope and Crown, my Joy and Glory. All I have is received at thy bountiful Hand; bountiful to a most worthy Creature, who neither could procure, nor deserve the least of all thy Mercies: And thou, by giving and compleating, hast not lost thy Property and Right in all, which by thy means I enjoy or do. For what am I, alas! but a weak helpless Wretch? acquainted with Misery from my very Cradle, and wasted with Trouble and Vexation; my Face is grown old with Tears, and my Heart perplexed and broken with Doubts, and Sorrows, and vehement Passions. I beg and long most earnestly for the Blessing of Peace, that Peace and inward Consolation, which thy Children feed and feast upon. If thou shalt fill my Soul with this, it will overflow with Joy and Praise, and continually breathe out holy Hymns to the Honour of thy Name. But if thou turn away thy Face, as sometimes thou seest fit to do, I find myself unable to run in the Way of thy Commandments; and, prostrating myself in the Anguish of my Soul, I beat my Breast, and wring my Hands, for the Loss of that Light and Comfort, that Strength and Protection, which I enjoyed, while under the Shadow of thy Wings, and defended from the Assaults of Sorrow and Adversity.

Righteous Father, (then say I) the Time is come when thou art pleased to try me, but even at this Time, and at all others, praised be thy Name. Dearest Father, it is very meet, that now thou callest me to it, I should suffer in Obedience to thy Will. Most Honoured Father, this is the Hour even that important Hour, which thou from all Eternity hast ordained, to be the Season of my outward Oppression and Discomfort becoming the Instrument of endless Life and Joy to me: But tho' this Heaviness may endure for a Night, yet Light and Glory will return

in the Morning. This, holy Father is thy own Appointment, and what thou wilt thou never wilt in vain. For even this Suffering in the Present Life is a Mark of thy Favour and Friendship; the Returns, the Instruments, the Manner, the Continuance of my Afflictions, are all of thy permitting; for nothing is or can be done, without thy Providence and Direction, without some wise and excellent Design. Even I myself
Psal. cxix. am sensible, *how good it is for me to have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes,* and utterly discard all Pride and Carnal Confidences. The Shame and Self Reproach I laboured under, hath taught me to expect Relief from God, and not from Man. And all my Afflictions put me upon contemplating the unsearchable Depths of thy Providence, which, with a wonderful Temper of Justice and Equity, layeth these Burdens upon Bad and Good, without any nice or discriminating Marks of Love or Hatred in this present World.

I will therefore render the most unfeigned Thanksgiving to my God, for that in marvellous Kindness he hath not spared the Rod, when it was convenient for me: I acknowledge his Mercy, even in the Pains and Crosses, and Sorrows I have endured, whether of Mind, or Body, or Estate; and yet much more, for those Refreshments and Remedies, which thou alone hast afforded me. For vain is all the Help of Man; but thou art the true, the powerful Physician of Souls,
Deut-xxxii. thou *woundest and healest; thou bringest down to the Gates of Hell, and raisest up again.* Thy Chastisement shall reach me Wisdom; thou shalt beat me with the Rod, and I shall not die. Behold me, Lord, most willingly submitting to thy Discipline: O strike and spare not, so thou bend my stubborn Heart, and bring down my high Spirit, and make me tractable and obedient. I, Lord, and Mine are at thy Disposal, put forth thy Hand and touch them as thou pleasest,

pleasest. For this I know, that how grievous soever these Temporal Crosses may be, yet better it is to feel the Weight of thy Hand here, than hereafter. All Things are naked and open to thee, even the utmost Recesses of our Hearts; Thou knowest the Things that will be before they are; and needest not that any should inform thee what is done upon Earth. Thou seest what will contribute most to my Improvement in Goodness; how great and good Effect Distresses have, to scour the Rust from our unactive Minds, and brighten all our Virtues. Take then, my God, thy own Measures; I only beg, that thou would'st not disdain, and give me over, and think me unworthy thy Care, for those Blemishes and Misdemeanors of my Life, which none are better acquainted with, which none indeed are thoroughly acquainted with, but Thou the Searcher of Hearts alone.

Work in me, I intreat thee, a true Amendment: Instruct me in all things fit for me to know; Dispose me to love all Things worthy my Affection; to think, that every Thing deserves my Praise, in proportion as it pleases thee; to esteem nothing highly, but what is precious and honourable in thy Sight; to look with a generous Disdain upon all that thou thinkest vile, and never be reconciled to what thou hatteest. Let me not, I beseech thee, judge by outward Appearances, the seeing of the Eye, or the hearing of the Ear, which are subject to infinite Delusions and Mistakes. But give me a right Judgment in all Things, whether they relate to this or another State, to the outward, or the inner Man: And above all, let it be my special Care to inform myself in thy Will concerning me. Men, who form their Judgment upon Sense, often err; Men, who set their Affections upon the sensible Objects of this World, are frequently disappointed and miserable: For, is a Man, for instance, one whit the better, because he is grown great in other Men's Esteem?

Esteem ? Is common Opinion the Standard of Merit ? Nothing less. Here every Man abuses his Fellow : The Cheat imposes upon another as great a Cheat ; the Vain puffs up the Vain ; the Blind misleads the Blind ; the Weak supports the Weak ; and all the while, by empty undeserved Commendations, each brings a true Reproach upon the other, while he extols him against Sense and Reason. For after all, these Praises are but Words without any Significance ? nothing more than Air and empty Sound ; for every Man is just so much, so good, and neither more nor less, than he is in thy Esteem only.

C H A P. LVI.

*A Man must be content with meaner Acts of Virtue,
when he is indisposed for greater.*

Christ.] DO not suppose, my Son, that thy Zeal can always be equally bright, or thy Mind capable of Transport and intent Contemplation upon heavenly Objects at all Times. Thou carriest about with thee a Load of Infirmary and Corruption, which will often damp the clearest Flames of Devotion, darken thy Mind, and check its noble Flights ; and make thee know and feel, that Mortal Flesh and Blood is a heavy, but inseparable, Incumbrance upon a Rational and Religious Soul. While Men are in the Body, there is no Remedy, but they must feel and groan under the Weight. And groan they ought indeed, when they consider, how great an Interruption this is to their Attendance upon, and entire Dedication of their Time and Thoughts, to God and Heavenly Objects. These they must be content to dwell upon as much as may be, by snatching all those happy
Inter-

Intervals, which Leisure and a good Temper of Mind allow them.

But when the Soul is indisposed for nobler Exercises, when Cares or Infirmities press it down, let it not be unactive. Variety is here of use, and Works of a meaner Rank in the Scale of Virtue must be recurred to, that thou may'st be still employ'd, still waiting for the happy Hour, when I shall return and visit thee with larger Measures of my Grace. Bear with Meekness the present Discomfort and Incapacity, the dry and barren State of thy Soul, till I send my refreshing Dews, and infuse a Principle of Fruitfulness, for a Product in greater Plenty and Perfection. For I can soon make thee to forget thy past Troubles, and satisfy thy Mind with the abundance of Peace. I will open for thee the spacious Plains of Scripture, that thou mayst be enlarged, and run the way of my Commandments in liberty, and with a Soul full of Joy and inward Exultation say, *I reckon that the* Rom. viii.
Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us.

C H A P. LVII.

*A Man should think Correction, not Comfort,
his Due.*

Disciple.] **L**Ord, I must needs with Shame confess myself altogether unworthy thy Comforts, or any part of that Care thou art pleased to take of my Soul; and therefore I have no Pretence to complain of hard Usage, or Injustice, when thou withdrawest thy Grace, and leavest me to myself. Whole Seas of Tears could not so cleanse my polluted Soul,

as to render it pure enough to merit the blessed Influences of thy Spirit. Scourges and Vengeance are the Portion of a Wretch, who by so many and so grievous Transgressions hath offended thy Majesty. The more therefore I reflect upon my own Sinfulness, the clearer and juster Notions I have of thy free undeserved Mercy. For merciful thou art, even to Astonishment, whose Bowels thus yearn over the Work of thy own Hands ; who thus to all the World hast manifested the Riches of thy Grace in the Vessels of Mercy, and extendest thy Liberality to those who have no Right to challenge, no Recommendation to induce thee to it.

But if we could pretend to Comforts, yet how could we expect such divine, such incomparably sweet and noble Marks of thy Favour ? so very unlike, so much above any human Helps or Encouragements ? For how could I expect the Bread of Life from Heaven ? Good Works I know of none I have to plead ; but the slightest Recollection even amazes and confounds me with Sins innumerable brought to my Remembrance. My vehement Proneness to Evil, and shameful Sloth and Backwardness to Reformation and Goodness, are of themselves so evident, that should I labour to cloke them, the Attempt must needs be vain ; for thou, the Searcher of Hearts, art privy to them ; thou canst disprove me, and no Advocate is to be found, who could offer any thing in my Vindication. What then can I justly lay claim to, but Hell and everlasting Flames ? I own with Grief and Shame, the Reproach and Contempt are my Due ; and that I am unworthy to be named among thy Sons, or even thy meanest Servants. Nature indeed starts back, and cannot without Reluctancy acknowledge its own Vileness and Guilt ; but I will offer Violence to my native Pride, and freely confess my Sins, that thou mayst shew thy Justice and Faithfulness

ness, in a full and free Pardon of the Faults I do freely confes.

But where shall I find Words fit for so miserable a Condition, or how shall so scandalous a Creature apply to thee for Pardon? I know no other Terms than these that become my Mouth. „Lord, I have sinned, I have „ done wickedly. Mercy thou Judge of Quick and „ Dead, Mercy or I perish. Respite thy Sentence „ yet a little while, and grant me some Time at least „ to bewail my Misery, before I be swallowed up in „ Darkness, and go into a Land black *Job x.* „ with the Terrors of the Shadow of „ Death. What other Reparation dost thou expect, „ what other can indeed be had from Men laden with „ Guilt and Infirmary, than that they should seriously „ bewail and humble themselves for their mighty and „ manifold Provocations? Hence all our Hopes of „ Remission spring, here the first Seeds of a Recon- „ ciliation take root; the Joy of a peaceful Conscience „ is sown in Tears; the Acknowledgment of our „ Weakness is the first Step towards repairing our „ Loss, the first Defence against the Wrath to come; „ and in these melancholy Solitudes the gracious God „ and penitent Soul meet and embrace each other. „ A broken and contrite Heart is re- *Psal. li.* „ puted a *Sacrifice*, and thou in marvel- „ lous Condescension preferrest it before the Odours, „ the sweetest Incense, or whole Hecatombs of Burnt- „ Offerings. Of this that precious Ointment, whose „ Perfumes, when it anointed thy holy Feet, filled „ the whole House, was an Emblem; for thou, Lord, „ never didst, or wilt despise a Soul afflicted with a „ Sense of Sin. Contrition and Humility are our San- „ ctuary against the Rage and Malice of our spiritual „ Adversary; and Tears of Penitence are that puri- „ fying Stream, which washes off the Stains and Ble- „ mishes of our defiled Souls.

C H A P. LVIII.

The Grace of God dwells not with worldly-minded Men.

Christ.] **T**HE Tokens of my Love are of a nobler kind, than that they should submit to be rival'd by the Blessing of this World ; for heavenly Comforts disdain to mix with those of Earth. If then, my Son, thou desirest to be filled full of my Benediction and Grace, all that obstruct its free Possession of thy Heart must be effectually discarded. Cover Retirement, and prefer private Conversation with God before all the Diversions of human Society. Esteem no Company so delightful as thy Closet and thy Devotions, and there by fervent Prayers pour out thy Soul alone, that thy Zeal may be quicken'd, and thy Peace of Conscience secured. Let the whole World be mean in thy Esteem, and account it a greater Honour to be called and chosen of God, than any Advantages of Fortune or Advancement can confer. For be assured thy Soul cannot admit of two such different Affections, as the Love of Me and transitory Pleasures. The most intimate Acquaintance and dearest Friends must not stand in Competition with Me ; but they who will be mine in good earnest, must follow the Apostle's Advice, and behave *2 Pet. iii.* *themselves as Strangers and Pilgrims in a World which must shortly be dissolved.* And when the Time of this or their own Dissolution approaches, the Joy and holy Trust of that Mind, which sits loose to all here below, is more blessed than Words can express.

But to live thus abstracted and disengaged from the World, is a Perfection not attainable by every common Man ; nor can the sensual Person taste the Delights, or enjoy the Liberty of a true spiritual State, For this requires

quires a distance to be kept from all external Objects, that those things human Nature loves most tenderly should be renounced; nay, even that himself should be so; for each Man is his own worst Enemy, and the most threatening Dangers rise from within. He that hath gained an entire Conquest over himself, will find no mighty Difficulties to subdue all other Opposition; and this is a compleat Victory indeed. And when the sensual Appetite submits readily to the rational Powers, and those Powers again as readily submit to my Will, this Man is Master of himself and all the World. But they who would aspire to this Perfection, must set out with Resolution, and early lay the Axe to the Root of the Tree; that no darling Sin, no corrupt or inordinate Affection may be left standing. For all that Bitterness and Sin, which is necessary to be hewn down, in order to an entire Reformation and heavenly Purity of Heart and Life, are but so many Branches of that corrupt Stock, the irregular Love of a Man's own self. And when that Stock is killed and cut down, profound Peace and uninterrupted Happiness are the Consequents of such Mortification.

The only Reason why so many continue still entangled in sensual Affections, and find themselves unable to soar above themselves and the Incumbrances here below, is, that very few have attained to the Skill of dying to their own Inclinations, and divesting themselves of narrow and selfish Designs. For he who affects to converse freely with God, must first abandon all carnal and immoderate Desires, and get loose from those Entanglements which clog and fasten down the Soul to Earth. They who will retain a Fondness of any created Being by minding temporal things, shew that they are content to set up their Rest short of Heaven and God himself. *Set therefore thy Affections on things above, and not on things on the Earth; for no Man is sufficient for the Service of*

Colos. iii. 2.

Matt. vi. 24. two Masters ; nor canst thou love Me and Mammon both.

C H A P. LIX.

The different Motions of Nature and Grace.

Christ.] **B**E careful, my Son, to distinguish between Nature and Grace, and nicely to observe their different Tendencies and Prospects. For these are so very distant, so contrary to each other, and yet withal so intricate, that they require a spiritual and enlighten'd Understanding exactly to discern them. In the general Desire of Good all Mankind agree. This is the Spur and Spring of every Word and Action; but that which produces so very different Effects from the same original Cause; is, that Men often mistake Shadows for Substance, and are imposed upon by false Appearances of Good.

Nature acts craftily, allures, ensnares, cheats those that attend to her Wiles, and proposes the gratifying herself for the End of all she does. Grace deals candidly and sincerely, complies with no Evil, puts no Cheat upon Men, does all with regard to God, and rests in him, as its supreme and only End. Nature declines Death and Sufferings, hates Trouble and Sorrow, Subjection and Obedience; Grace is exercised in perpetual Mortification and Self-denial, chuses to be over-ruled, to submit; nay, restrains even lawful and innocent Liberties; does not affect Dominion and Superiority, but chuses to live in a State of Humility and Subjection; and esteems no Hardship, no Compliance uneasy for the sake of God and a good Conscience. Nature is selfish, and always computes what Profit every Action may bring to the Person that does it; Grace overlooks all private Gain, and labours

labours chiefly to promote the Publick Good. Nature delights in Honours and Preferments, in a celebrated Name, and the Commendation of Men; Grace atcribes all the Honour and Praise to God, and thinks, that things done well, are well rewarded by his Acceptance and Approbation. Nature dreads Ignominy and Contempt, but Grace accounts it Matter of great Joy to be exposed and vilified in a good Cause. Nature is pleased with Ease, and Indulgence, and bodily Rest; Grace is ever active, and undertakes Business and Toil with Cheerfulness. Nature is charmed with Beauty and Curiosity, and disdains things that are mean, and vulgar, and common; Grace is delighted with such as are plain and low in the Esteem of the World, disdains not those that are unpalatable, nor thinks herself the worse for the want of outward Gaieties and Ornaments, Nature aims at transitory Enjoyments, is fond of Wealth and Increase, tenderly affected with Losses and Disappointments, and provoked to the last degree with Insolence and Reproach; Grace keeps eternal Advantages in view, neglects the fading and perishing; bears Losses with Evenness of Temper, endures Contempt and Scandal patiently. For these she considers are Things of no mighty Concern, to one whose Heart and Treasure are in Heaven, a Place where they are safe and no Misfortune can reach them. Nature is niggardly and griping, and chuses rather to receive than give; Grace bountiful and kind, despising sordid Gains and Parsimony, content with a little, distributes liberally and cheerfully, and esteems it *Act. xx.*
more blessed to give than to receive.

Nature inclines to Creature-Comforts, to fleshly Delights. to worldly Vanities and Poms, to wandering and idle Diversions; Grace fixes the Heart upon God and Goodness, concerns itself with the World as little as may be, hates fleshly Lusts; checks and confines roving Imaginations, and affects Privacy and

Solitude. Nature is much delighted with sensual Pleasures ; Grace feels no Pleasure but in God alone, and prefers that before all the Delights that the Objects of Sense can afford. Nature does nothing without some Prospect of Interest, and for every Kindness expects as good or better Returns, either of Things in kind, or at least of Favour and Applause for its pretended Generosity and sets a very high Value upon all the Obligations it lays ; Grace desires no Recompence in this World, but looks upon God as her Reward ; nor are the Supplies and Conveniences of Life any farther of Consideration with her, than as a comfortable Subsistence in this World may be serviceable in promoting and facilitating the Endeavours after another.

Nature values herself upon a diffusive Interest, and Multitude of Relations and Friends, Quality and noble Blood, and therefore fawns upon or favours Men in Power, courts and carresses the Rich, commends, and is partial to Persons of the same Condition, or Opinion, or Party ; Grace is charitable and kind even to Enemies, is not exalted by great or numerous Friendships, and thinks the Descent and Family of a man a very despicable thing, unless his Virtue be as much more eminent than those of his Inferiors, as his Birth and Rank is above theirs. Grace favours the Poor rather than the Rich, and is more concerned for the Hard Fortune of an innocent Person, than of a great one ; pays its Respects to true intrinsic Worth, not to the mere Signs and Trappings of it, which often only shew where it ought to be, not where it really is ; encourages the Good in Virtue, instead of flattering and soothing up the Mighty in their Wickedness and Folly, and labours indefatigably to conform those who profess themselves God's Children, to the Likeness of their heavenly Father's Excellencies, by propagating all manner of Piety and Goodness.

Nature is easily provoked to Discontent by hard Circumstances ; Grace bears Want and Poverty with Meekness and much Patience. Nature's Ends and Designs constantly center in herself ; but Grace considers her Original, and thinks that all should return thither from whence at first it came, arrogates nothing to itself, is not assuming, does not content for Praise or Preference, is not dogmatical and peremptory in her own Opinions, but in all Searches after Truth, submits her own Reason and Judgment to the incomprehensible Wisdom of God. Nature affects to be knowing, to understand and penetrate the profoundest and darkest Mysteries, makes Ostentation of all her new Discoveries, and pretends to Experiment and Demonstration, labours to distinguish herself, to be thought wiser than the rest of the World, and would be extolled and admired for all that is spoken, or written, or done : Grace thinks it not advisable to lay out Time or Thought upon new or unprofitable Curiosities, but considers that the Ruin of Mankind is owing to that busy desire of knowing what God thought fit to conceal from them ; that this inquisitive, pretending Temper, is a Sprout from that old Root of Bitterness ; that establish'd Truths may be depended upon, but new and fanciful Notions are almost no sooner entertained, than they are disproved and exploded again ; that Men should therefore check that vain Pleasure, which tickles their itching Minds upon these Occasions ; abandon Vain-glory, labour rather to conceal, than to publish their Advantages ; and make Usefulness, and Virtue, and God's Honour, the only End of all their Knowledge and Studies. For to him alone all Thanks and Praise must of necessity be due, who gives Men all they have of his own mere Motion and free Mercy.

And such is Grace ; a Light superior to Nature, which should direct and preside over it ; the peculiar

Gift of God; the distinguishing Character of his Chosen; the sure Pledge of everlasting Salvation; for it raises a Man's Affections from Earth to Heaven, and changes him from Flesh to Spirit. And because these two Principles are acted by such different Motives, proceed in such different Methods, and pursue such differing Ends; therefore, in proportion as Nature is weaken'd and subdu'd, the larger Measures of Grace are imparted, the more Mens Virtues are improved, and the glorious Image of God renew'd in their Hearts by holy and heavenly Dispositions.

C H A P. LX.

The Weakness of corrupt Nature, and Efficacy of divine Grace.

Disciple. **T**HOU hast indeed, my God, created me in thy own Image, after thy Likeness, *Gen. i. 14.* and commanded *me to be holy, as thou thyself art holy.* *1 Pet. i.* O grant me I beseech thee, that Favour and Assistance, which thy own Word hath taught me is so important, so absolutely necessary to Salvation, that I may vanquish my own Nature, whose Inclinations are now so degenerate, so corrupt, that they have a strong and constant Tendency to Sin and Death. For I Feel and lament a *Law Rom. vii.* of Sin in my Body, warring continually against the Law of my Mind, drawing me to compliance with the fleshly and sensual Appetite, and disabling me from any Resolute Resistance against its fatal Motions, except thy divine Grace pour in fresh Succours, and help me to stand in the Day of Battel. Lord, I have need, not only of thy Grace, but of very plentiful and powerful Communications of it, to
turn

turn the Bias of Nature, which from my very Infancy preponderates to Evil. For this Infection is derived from the first Parent of Mankind, and is the Punishment of his Offence diffused upon his whole Posterity; so that the human Nature, which came pure and good out of thy creating Hand, is tainted and perverted, and all the Motions now remaining draw the wrong way, and bend to Sin and Earth.

The little Power left in us to do good, is like a very small Spark covered with a huge Heap of Embers; Light of Reason clouded with a thick noisome Mist of Darkness and Error. And tho' by this all the Distinctions of Good and Evil, of Truth and Falshood, are not utterly lost, yet the Power of performing what our better Sense approves, is gone; the Light of Truth is dim and feeble, and the Integrity of our Minds and Affections is blemish'd, and diverted from attending to it impartially. Hence it comes to pass, that tho' sometimes I am delighted with thy Law in the inner Man, and fully convinced that *thy Commandment is holy, and just, and good*, condemning Wickedness and warning me of the Rocks and Precipices, which, in steering my Course through the Waves of this troublesome World, I must be watchful to avoid; yet still with *the Flesh I serve the Law of Sin*, and find a greater Disposition to follow Lust and Sense, than to be governed by Reason and Religion. Hence I so often feel the *Will to do well*; but *how to perform what I thus will, I find not*. Hence I often make and repeat good Resolutions with great Sincerity; but, for want of thy Assistance to counterpoise my Infirmitics, quickly fall from my Stedfastness, and am beaten off with the very Approach of Difficulty and Opposition. Hence I discern the Way I should walk in; but when I am inform'd of my Duty, and endeavour to raise myself above the World and its Temptations, a fatal innate Weight

draws me down again, and checks my Soul in its intended Flights to Heaven and thee.

How absolutely needful then, my God, is thy Grace to help me in beginning, in carrying on, in accomplishing every good Work ; since without it I can do nothing, and yet with it can do even all things ? yet not I, Lord, but thou, who art in me, and strengthenest me. O Gift truly divine ! without which no Desert of Man, no Endowments or Qualifications of Nature are of any Worth or Significance at all ! Sciences and Arts, Riches and Power, Beauty and Strength, Wit and Eloquence what are they, Lord, or what to be accounted of, if not seconded, assisted, exalted, perfected by Grace ? these are Accomplishments distributed promiscuously to Good and Bad ; but Grace is a Gift peculiar to thy Children and Chosen, and such as renders the happy Men that have it worthy of eternal Life and Happiness. A Gift so singularly excellent, that neither the Gift of Prophecy, nor the Power of working Miracles, nor the understanding of sublimest and most abstruse Mysteries, nor Faith, nor Hope, nor any other Virtue or Privilege, can recommend us to God without it.

O blessed Efficacy of Grace, which makes the poor in Spirit rich in Virtue and good Works ; and that Man so enrich'd, humble and poor in Spirit ! Come, heavenly Gift, descend from above, shed thyself into my Soul, and fill every dark Corner there with Light and Comfort ; rouse and shake off my Sloth, moisten the dry Soil, and command Fruitfulness out of that barren Ground. Vouchsafe me, Lord, this Blessing ; for this alone is sufficient for me, though thou shouldst think fit to deny or withdraw all that Nature can either bestow, or is most fond of acquiring. Give me but this Defence, and no Temptation shall confound me, no Calamity dismay or make me afraid, For this alone is Strength and Courage, Wisdom and
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Protection ; stronger than all my Enemies, and wiser than all human Counsels and Contrivances ; the Teacher of Truth, the Mistress of holy Discipline, the Light of the Soul, the Solace of Troubles, the Resolver of Doubts ; the Balm of my Wounds, the Dispeller of Melancholy, the Banisher of Fear, the Cherisher of Devotion, the Parent of Contrition, the Spring of holy Tears, and of all those Streams that wash and purge polluted Consciences. What am I without this, but dry Stubble, a rotten Trunk, dead to good Works, useless and unprofitable, and fit for nothing but to be trodden under Foot, and cast into the Fire ? Let therefore, O my God, I most bumbly and heartily intreat, O let this Grace and Favour of thine *always prevent and follow me, and make me continually to be given to all good Works, that in all my Actions begun, continued and ended in thee, I may glorify thy holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain everlasting Life.* Amen, Amen,

Collect for
xvii. Sunday
after Trinity

Collect after
Communion

C H A P. LXI.

Self-denial enforced from Christ's Example.

Christ.] THE more my Son, thou forsakest thy self, the nearer Approaches thou makest toward Me. As the Desires and intemperate Love of Things without must be discarded, in order to the Peace of one's own Breast ; so even the Love of one's own self must be laid aside, in order to a perfect Union with God. Learn therefore absolutely to deny thy own Will for mine, without Contradiction or Complaint. Follow Me, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* Without the Way can be no walking ; with-

out the Truth no Knowledge ; without the Life no living. Keep then in this Way, for it is unalterable ; believe in this Truth for it is infallible ; hope for, and aspire to this Life, for it is true, happy, and eternal Life. Continue in my Way, and thou shalt know the Truth, and the Truth shall make thee free,

Matth. xix. that thou mayst inherit everlasting Life.
If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments. If thou wilt know the Truth, believe my Words. If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast. If thou wilt save thy Life hereafter, despise it here. If thou wilt be exalted in Heaven, abase thyself upon Earth. If thou desire to reign with me, take up the Cross with me. For none but they who imitate my Cross, are in the right Way to Happiness and true Glory.

Disciple.] This Way, O Lord, is strait and rugged, such as the World declines, and cannot endure to think of. Therefore I beg thy Grace would enable me to despise the World, and dissent from the general Opinion of Men, in compliance with thy Command and

John xv. Example. *For the Servant is not greater than his Lord, nor the Disciple above his Master.* Let thy Servant then be guided in thy Steps, for with thee is Life and true Holiness. And all I read or hear from any other Hand, gives me no Refreshment, no true Delight.

Christ.] If thou knowest these things, my Son, happy art thou if thou do them. For Practice, and not Knowledge, shall inherit the Blessing.
John xiii. He that keepeth my Commandments, and doth
John xiv. them, he it is that loveth me, and I will love him in return, and manifest myself to him, and set him upon a Throne with me in my Father's Kingdom.

Disciple.] Lord, make me a Partaker of this gracious Promise. The Cross which I have received from thy Hand, I will bear with Constancy even unto Death.

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The Life of a true Christian is indeed one continued Cross, but since this is the Way that leads to Paradise, it is by no means fit that I should depart from it, or repent of my holy Resolutions and good Beginnings,

Come then, my Christian Brethren let us advance boldly. Courage, for Christ is with us; he does not only lead us on, but will enable us to follow him. For his sake we have taken up the Cross, and for his sake we must persevere in bearing it. Behold, the King and Captain of our Salvation marches at our Head, ready to fight our Battels. Let us, like gallant Soldiers, follow; let us abandon our Fears, and manfully prepare to die in the Field; and not stain our Honour, and lose our Crown, by flinching from that Service, and those Hardships which he hath made our Duty and our Glory.

C H A P. LXII.

Against being dejected with Temptations.

Christ.] Judge not my Son, of thy Favour and Acceptance with God by such false Measures as the Warmth of thy Devotion, and the Delight which results from the Discharge of thy Duty. For I am better pleased with Humility and Patience, and deep Contrition of Heart in a disconsolate and afflicted State, than with an eager Zeal, and the most exalted Acts of an easy and prosperous Piety. And whence is it, dost thou think, that every little Scandal, which detracts from thy Reputation, so sensibly affects thee? Were it yet more to thy Disparagement, yet could it not be worth thy Concern. This is not the first Injury of this kind, nor is it like

to be the last, if thou live longer among Men. And what is not new or strange, ought not to surprize thee. I know thy Courage and pretended Bravery, while Danger keeps its distance. Thou canst discourse like a Philosopher and a Christian, and give excellent Advice to thy Friends when they labour under any Distress; but when their Case happens to be thy own, and some unexpected Calamity comes home to thee, thy Prudence and Resolution forsake thee quite, and thou standest no less in need of the Counsel and Support, which thou wert wont so freely to impart to others heretofore.

Let this Experiment remind thee of thy own Frailty, which, by such Instances, appear not to be Proof against the slightest Misfortunes. For even these Instances are greatly for thy Advantage, and bring thee to a right and perfect understanding of thy own Condition. Grow wiser at least at thy own Expence; and as thy calmer Reason shews they ought to be, so let thy Behaviour manifest, that these tender Resentments of temporal Evils are banished out of thy Mind. If thou canst not entertain Adversity with absolute Indifference, yet let it not drive thee to Despondency and wicked Distrust; and however the first Onset may disturb thee, yet rally quickly, and let it not long overpower thee. And tho' perhaps thou art not arrived to

James i. that Perfection of counting it all joy when thou fallest into divers Temptations, thou

canst not be excused from undergoing them with Meekness, and Resignation, and Patience. If thou art not yet got even thus far, but some indecent Reflections rise up in thy Mind, yet let not this secret Indignation break out into irreverent Expressions, but set a watch

Psal. cxli. upon thy tongue, and keep the door of thy lips.
& xxxix. Resolve at least that thy Mouth shall not offend; and tho' thy Heart be hot with-

in thee, yet let not any passionate Complaints burst out.

out, which may cast Imputations upon the Honour of God, impeach the Justice and Goodness of Providence, or give Offence to thy weaker Brethren. For, by thus manning and guarding well the Outworks, thy inward Commotions will in time be compos'd; thy Sorrow by degrees shall turn into Joy, and the Favour and Mercy of God be inclined to relieve and comfort thee, in recompence to thy Reverence and Submission to his good Pleasure.

As I live, saith the Lord, I will help thee speedily, and comfort them who earnestly seek me, who put their trust in my Salvation. Call up thy Christian Fortitude, and sink not under thy Burthen, but prepare for greater Trials. If thy former Troubles have overwhelmed thy Spirits, prevailed over thy Temper and thy Virtue; let not the Remembrance of your former Trials discourage thee. *The Lord knoweth whereof thou art made, he remembreth that thou art but Dust;* *Pf. ciii.*

A Man, and not God; Flesh and not Angel, or unbodied Spirit; How canst thou then expect to continue in an undisturb'd State of Goodness? How should thy Virtue be above the shocks and shakings of Temptation, when even the Angels kept not their first Estate, and Man in Paradise so soon fell from Innocence? I am thy sole Protection. who raise the Souls dejected with Sorrow, preserve those who acknowledge and bewail their own Weakness, and glorify with myself the humble Christians, who are ashamed of their Follies and Miscarriages.

Disciple.] Blessed be thy Mercy, for the gracious Words, which drop from thy Mouth, soft as the gentle Dew, and sweeter than Honey and the Honey-comb. What would become of me, in the Extremity of my Distress and Anguish of my Soul, did not thy Promises and seasonable Instructions refresh and comfort me? But be it as thou wilt; for I cannot think it any great matter, how long or boisterous my Voyage is, so thou
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at last conduct me safe to that peaceful Haven, where good Men are at rest. Let my Afflictions be never so great, so thou grant a happy Issue, and turn my Sufferings to good effect. Be my Condition in this Life Adverse or Prosperous, no Prosperity will profit, no Adversity harm me, but in Proportion to the State in which I die. And if I go well out of the World, my Continuance in it cannot be so troublesome, that I should have cause to repent or complain. Order my Affairs then as thou pleasest; but always, O my God, remember me for good. Lead me in the right and ready way to thy Kingdom, dispose my every Action towards the Attainment of Salvation, and *let me so pass through Things Temporal, that I finally lose not the things Eternal.* Amen.

C H A P. LXIII.

Against Prying into Things too high for us, and pretending to fathom the Depths of God and Providence.

Christ.] DO not, my Son, take upon thee to dispute, or determine any thing concerning abstruse and difficult Points; nor too curiously enquire into those misterious Dispensations, which God hath purposely concealed from thee. Concern not thyself about the amazing Distributions of Grace or Providence; why one Man is forsaken and in Disfavour with God, another so surprizingly indulged by him; This Person exercised with Afflictions and Sorrows, or That so gently dealt with, so unaccountably exalted. These are Things out of thy Sphere; And all the Parts and Penetration, the acutest Wit, and acquired Improvements of Man, are much too short.

short and feeble, to enter into the Reasons of the Divine Counsels. If therefore such Curiosities return upon thee, look upon them as the Suggestions of the Devil, by which he labours to disquiet and unsettle thee. If Men, impertinently busy, require a Solution of such Difficulties, content thyself with that general Answer of the Prophet : *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy judgments ; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether ; His Righteousness standeth like the strong Mountain, fix'd and immoveable, eminent and conspicuous ; And his judgments are like the great Deep : A vast and dark Abyss, such as we cannot see to the bottom of, or fathom with the short Line of a Finite Understanding.*

My Methods and Dealings are to be admired and had in reverence, not sawcily criticized upon, by my own Creatures. For no Creature can have a Capacity proportioned to them ; and what Men cannot comprehend, they should not presume to take into Examination.

As little ought they to enquire and dispute concerning the Merits or the Preference of Good Men : Which of the Saints excels in Virtue, or is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. For these are Questions, in which Men are no ways concerned, such as engender Strife and Debate, and turn to no good Account. They cherish Arrogance and Pride, Envy and Faction, while Men break into Parties, and each contends for the Pre-eminence of Him, whose Order and Patronage he is devoted to, or whom his own Vain Imagination inclines him most to honour. The effect of this is very visible, and the Mischiefs, that spring from such an impertinent Zeal, exceeding numerous and lamentable : The Controversy neither possible to be decided, nor worth deciding, if it were. And, if those Saints have any Knowledge of what passes here below, this indiscreet

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and partial Zeal cannot but be highly displeasing to them. For I am not a God of Contention and Faction, but of Order, and Peace, and Love. And these are the Genuine Products of true Modesty and Humility, such as esteems others better than itself ; but inconsistent with the bold assuming Temper, which is restless and discontented, if any other be preferred before it. It may be, Affection and honest Zeal may dispose some Men to be more liberal in their Respect on this or that Side of the differing Parties ; but, do not such consider, that such Affection is not the effect of Grace or Religion, but merely of Human Infirmary ? These are such Prepossessions as I can never be capable of ; for all the Saints are equally mine. My Hand made them Men, my assisting Grace made them Saints ; I enriched them with Virtues, and crowned them all with Glory. I know what each have done, what Occasions thy had, what Improvements they made. I foreknew them before Time was ; they chose not me, but I them ; and singled them out of the Common Crowd. I drew them with the Cords of Love and Mercy, conducted them thro' great Variety of Trials and Afflictions ; sustain'd them with uncommon Comforts and Recruits, enabled them to persevere, and rewarded the Constancy myself had given. I know the first and last ; and my fatherly, my inexpressible Affection extends to them all. For all are Instruments of my Praise and Glory, so many Monuments and Eternal Trophies of my Goodness ; freely advanced to what they are, by my Bounty and Favour, without any Right or antecedent Merit of their own. He therefore, who despises the least of these, is guilty of Disrespect to the greatest ; for this Contempt reflects at last on Me, the Author of their Virtues and their Happiness ; and therefore in Me alone should all the Honour, pretended to be paid to Them, centre. Their Interests and Properties are no longer separate ; For Charity hath made

made them One, and knit them into the same Mystical Body, whose Honours, and Advantages, and Inclinations, and Joys, are inseparably the same. Nay, which is the utmost Perfection of Charity, they all conspire in loving Me more than themselves, or any Merits or Respects of their own ; for, being in that happy State exalted above themselves, they are entirely taken up with the Love and Honour of God. This is their Happiness and utmost End. Nothing can divert them to meaner Prospects, no mixture of Self comes in betwixt, to damp the pure Flames of this everlasting Love.

Away then with these vain Curiosities, these eager Disputes, concerning the Condition of the Blessed ; which betray a Prevalence of Carnal and sensual Appetites, such as have no Notions higher than particular Gains and separate Interests. Nature and Partiality incline such Dispositions, to act, and Desire, and Love, and Hate, upon privat and personal Considerations ; and then they fondly transfer the same Idea's and the same Behaviour, from Earthly to heavenly Objects. Alas ! The difference is the widest in the World, and nothing in Nature so distant, as the silly Imaginations of such Novices in Matters of another World, from those juster Apprehensions, which Minds, enlightened from above, entertain upon these Occasions, Be not too curious then, my Son, in Matters above thy Capacity ; but rather let it be thy Care and constant Thought, how thou may'st be found, tho' it be but the least, in the Kingdom of Heaven. For couldst thou understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge ; couldst thou distinctly view the several Orders and Places of each Angel and Spirit above ; yet what would this avail, farther than as it excited in the less for thy Own , and greater Zeal for my Honour ? The Man, who seriously reflects upon the Multitude of his own Sins, and the Defects and Worthlessness of his own Virtues, how few, how poor, how far short they are

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of

of the Perfection of those bright Examples heretofore; employs his Mind upon a Subject, which God likes much better than such empty Speculations of them who have set those Examples.

This is a Controversy, which they themselves never trouble themselves about. For they ascribe nothing to any Deserts of their own, but acknowledge the whole of what they have and are, to be the sole Effect of my infinite Liberality and Love. And their Happiness and Honour is compleat, by the Joy they take in the Fruition of God and his Glory. The more exalted any of these are, the more modest they are; the more dear, and the more like to me. Thus much is intimated by that Vision, where they are said to *cast their Crown at the Feet of God, and falling down upon their Faces before the Throne, and before the Lamb, to worship him that liveth for ever and ever.*

How absurd is it to see Men zealously contending who is greatest in the Kingdom of God, who are not solicitous in the mean while to know, what much more nearly concerns them, whether they shall have any place at all there-themselves? And yet to be least there is to be great, for even the least are Sons and Heirs of God. *A little one shall become a thousand, and the Child shall die an hundred Years old, but the Sinner of an hundred Years old shall be accursed.* When the Disciples enquired who should be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, this was the Answer made to that Demand; *Except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore whosoever shall humble himself as this little Child, the same shall be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.* Wo to them who disdain to imitate the Humility and Meekness of little Children; for strait and low is the Gate of Heaven, such as the towings of Ambition, and

and swellings of bloated Vanity can never stoop to, or enter at. Wo to the Rich, who have their Consolation in this World, for while the Poor are admitted into Paradise, they shall stand Weeping and Wailing without. But rejoice, ye Meek, and Humble, and Poor, for Yours is the Kingdom of God; if ye heartily embrace and obey the Truth, and be Rich in Patience and good Dispositions.

C H A P. LXIV.

God is all the Good Man's Hope and Confidence.

Disciple.] **I**N whom, O Lord, is my Hope, while here below? or what, of all the Things under Heaven, can minister Peace and Comfort to my Soul? *Truly my Hope is even in Thee,* and my Joy and Trust in thy Mercy alone. When were my Affairs in ill Condition with thee? Or what can prevent my being exquisitely miserable without thee? Poverty for thy sake is infinitely rather to be chosen, than all the Riches and Greatness in the World, in Exchange for thy Favour; and Earth and Exile with that Favour more blissful, than Heaven without the Fruition of Thee. For Heaven is Heaven by thy blessed Presence; and where that does not reside, all is Death and the Grave, and Hell. Thou art my Desire and my Portion, and therefore to thee my Sighs and Groans, and Cries and Prayers, continually ascend. I have no other Stay or Refuge, who can send seasonable and suitable Relief to all my Dangers and Necessities; but thou alone art my hope and trust, my effectual Comforter, and faithful Friend.

Others pursue their own private Ends and Advantages, but thou seekest my Improvement and Happiness, and orderest all Things for my Good. Even my Temptations and Afflictions are appointed to do me Service. These are the Methods, by which the Fidelity of thy Chosen is brought to the Test; and even the harsher Dispensations ought as much to engage my Affections,

fections, and excite my Gratitude and Praise, as the brightest Comforts and most desired Prosperity. In Thee therefore, O my God, I rest my Soul; Thou art my Sanctuary, where I deposite the Burthen of all my Griefs and Troubles. For there alone can They and I be safe, since all things else are feeble and uncertain, neither able, nor always disposed, to comfort or protect me. Friends cannot do what they wish; Great Men will not, or cannot help; the Wise, without Thee, mistake their Measures; Books are but insignificant Diversion, and yield no solid Consolation; Wealth cannot buy Ease and Peace of Mind; Fortresses and Converts cannot hide me from Calamity, unless thou be with those Friends and strengthen those great Men, and direct those Councillors, and instruct me by those Books, and assist me in the Use of Wealth, and guard that strong Retreat. For Peace and Happiness are entirely in Thee. Thou art the End, the Sum, the Source of all Good; the Perfection of Life, the Depth of Wisdom and Knowledge; And Hope in Thee is the surest, the most sensible Support thy Servants can have, in the Miseries of this mortal Life.

To Thee therefore lift I up my Eyes, O Father of Mercies and Lover of Men. Comfort my Soul in Trouble, and purify it with thy Grace, that it may be a clean and holy Habitation, such as thy glorious Majesty does not disdain to dwell in. Let no Impurity be left in this Temple; but purge it thoroughly from every thing, which may offend those Eyes, that cannot behold Iniquity or Uncleaness. Look upon me in thy great Goodness, and, after the Multitude of thy Mercies, hear the Prayer of thy poor Servant, now wandering in a distant and desolate Wilderness. Oh! keep my Soul, and deliver me; lead me safe thro' this Vale of Sorrow and Danger, and conduct me by the Way of Peace and Holiness to my own Home, even to my heavenly Country, the Land of Promise, the Presence and eternal Fruition of my God. *Amen.*

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